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Translations

INTO ENGLISH VERSE

FROM THE

POEMS OF DAVYTH AP GWILYM,

A WELSH BARD OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

Tri phriv anhepgor Awen: llygad yn gweled anian—calon yn teimlaw anian—a glewder a vaidd gydvyned ag anian.

The three indispensable attributes of genius: an eye to see nature—a heart to feel nature—and boldness and energy to follow nature.

Triads of Bardism.

LONDON:
HENRY HOOPER, 13, PALL-MALL EAST.

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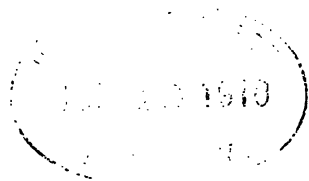

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Dedication.

To WILLIAM OWEN PUGHE, Esq., LL.D

My dear Dr. Pughe,

Availing myself of your kind permission, I have inscribed this little volume to you. A tribute so humble—though it can add nothing to the honours of the most distinguished Celtic scholar of his day—is due from the translator to the illustrious preserver of the songs of 'the Demetian Nightingale.'

I remain,

Ever your sincere and attached friend,

Maelog.

A SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE OF DAVYTH AP GWILYM*.

ONE of the most remarkable consequences of the conquest of Wales by Edward I. was the depression of that lofty poetical spirit which had previously distinguished the Welsh nation. Before that event the Cambro-British bards appear to have devoted their genius to the grand theme of national independence.

* For the materials of the following Life of Davyth ap Gwilym we are entirely indebted to the ingenuity and research of Dr. William Owen Pughe; they were first published by him in 1789, in the form of a biographical sketch prefixed to the original poems. In the present arrangement of them, I have for the most part adopted the memoir published by Mr. Humphreys Parry, in his Cambrian Plutarch.

I may here remark, that in spelling many Welsh names, such as 'Morfydd Gwyn ab Nudd,' &c.—'Morvyth Gwyn ap Neath' (according to the English mode of orthography), I have not been influenced by any disposition to build theories, but solely by the wish to convey to the English reader, for whom, in fact, these translations are intended, the sound of these names. By adhering to the Welsh style of spelling, I should have left him without any idea of the sound of these appellations, and thereby, in many instances, have given him *false notions of* the metre and the rhyme.

Habituated to regard the martial spirit of their countrymen as the only bulwark against foreign oppression, they naturally selected the single virtue of military prowess as the great subject of their eulogy and their songs. Hence it was, that with the destruction of their country's freedom, they appear to have lost the only object of their art and the sole source of their inspiration; and nearly a century elapsed before we find any symptoms of its reviving influence. To this result other causes must have powerfully contributed: the jealous policy of the English authorities, by whom the bards were justly viewed as the great promoters of a spirit of independence among the people; the fanaticism of the mendicant friars, who appear to have denounced many of the refinements and amusements of life as at variance with Christianity; and, above all, that general feeling of fear and despondency, which always pervades a recently subjugated nation, and destroys all sympathy with the joyous songs of the minstrel.

About the middle of the fourteenth century the poetical genius of the Welsh began to break forth anew, but with its characteristics essentially changed; both in sentiment and style, the 'Awen*' of the bards had undergone a complete revolution. We no longer meet in their works with those warlike scenes, and those songs in praise of the heroes of their country, which occur so often in the poems of their predecessors. The Welsh minstrel was now

* '*Awen,*' the term applied to the poetical inspiration of the *bards.*

content to tune his harp to themes of love and social festivity; and sportive allusions to objects of nature, and to the picturesque manners of that interesting period, were made to supply the place of lays in celebration of martial achievements. Whatever may have been lost in fire and sublimity by this transition was perhaps more than compensated by the superior polish, vivacity, and imaginativeness, which distinguish the bards of the new school. The dawn of the epoch here noticed was signalized by the birth of Davyth ap Gwilym, on whom the appellation of the Petrarch of Wales has, with some degree of propriety, been bestowed.

A full and authentic history of the life of Davyth ap Gwilym would be a great literary treasure; not only would it throw much light upon the poetry and manners of his age, it would no doubt add to our historical knowledge. Unhappily, however, the only materials extant for such a work, consist of a few traditionary anecdotes preserved in manuscript, and the allusions to his personal history contained in the bard's own poems. The exact year of his birth is involved in obscurity, but we possess data from which it may be conclusively established that he began and ended his days within the fourteenth century. Even the spot of his nativity has furnished food for controversy; and our bard may be numbered among the men of genius whose birthplace has been a subject of patriotic rivalry; accordingly, on one hand we find the island of Anglesea*

* The ground on which it has been contended that the poet

strenuously laying claim to this honour, while on the other it appears to be satisfactorily proved that the poet first saw the light (about the year 1340), at a place called Bro Gynin, in the parish of Llanbadarn Vawr, in the county of Cardigan. It is recorded in an old poem which has been handed down to us that Taliesin, the most celebrated of the ancient Welsh bards, foretold the honour that awaited this spot, in being the birth-place of a minstrel whose song would be 'as the sweetness of wine *.'

Davyth ap Gwilym was of noble origin. On the paternal side he was allied to some of the most illustrious families of North Wales; his father, Gwilym Gam, being a descendant of Llywarch ab Bran, head of one of 'the fifteen tribes' who composed the aristocracy † of that division of Wales,

was a native of Anglesea is, that there was a house called Bro Gynin in that island; but it is plain that Bro Gynin, in South Wales, must be the place of his birth, for, in many passages of his works, he calls himself a native of Bro Gadell, or the 'Country of Cadell.' Now this term is a poetical appellation for South Wales; Rodri, king of Wales, having, in 877, divided the principality amongst his sons, when South Wales fell to the share of his son Cadell.

* 'Brydydd a' i gywydd fal gwin.'

† "These llwythau or tribes were the nobility of North Wales. They commenced extremely early, and at different times were lords of distinct districts, and called to that honour by several princes. The latest were about the time of Davydd ap Owen Gwynedd, who began his reign in 1169. We are left ignorant of the form by which they were called to this rank. All we know is, that each of them enjoyed some office in the court of *our princes*, which seems to have been hereditary, and probably *attendant on the* honour."—*Pennant's Tour in North Wales.*

and related by marriage to Owain Gwynedd, a monarch no less distinguished as a patron of genius than by the valour and sagacity with which he protected the liberties of his country against the ambitious projects of Henry II. On his mother's side the poet was connected with the Magnates of the southern division of the principality; his mother, Ardudvul, being the sister of Llywelyn ab Gwilym Vychan, of Emlyn, a person of considerable importance in that part of the country, and styled in some accounts 'the lord of Cardigan.'

Yet, whatever may have been Davyth ap Gwilym's pretensions to an illustrious descent, there is reason to believe that his birth was illegitimate, or, at least, that the union of his parents, if it had been previously sanctioned by legal rites, had not received the countenance of their friends. At no distant period, however, a reconciliation must have been effected, as the embryo bard was taken in his infancy under the protection of his uncle, Llywelyn ab Gwilym, who is related to have been a man of some parts. He accordingly became his nephew's tutor, and seems to have discovered in him the early indications of that particular talent, for which he was afterwards so conspicuous, and in the cultivation of which Llywelyn afforded his young pupil all the encouragement and assistance in his power.

About the age of fifteen Davyth ap Gwilym returned to his paternal home, where, however, he resided but a short time, owing, as it would appear, to the unpleasant bickerings that took place between *him and his* parents, in consequence of his satirical

propensities, which, even at that early age, he could not restrain. Some of his effusions, written during this period, have been preserved; and, whatever ingenuity they may evince, considering the years of the writer, they are by no means indicative of his filial affection. These domestic altercations caused the young bard once more to be separated from his natural guardians; and we accordingly find him, at an early age, enjoying, at Maesaleg in Monmouthshire, the friendship and patronage of Ivor Hael, a near relative of his father *.

Ivor, deservedly surnamed Hael, or 'the Generous,' received his young kinsman with an affectionate kindness, which he even carried so far as to appoint him his steward, and the instructor of his only daughter, although Davyth ap Gwilym's qualifications for these duties were not, it is probable, at that time, of the most obvious character. At

* Ivor Hael was, by both parents, of a noble lineage: by his mother's side he was descended from Rhys ab Tewdwr. He was the owner of several houses in South Wales, one of which, the old mansion of Gwenalt in Monmouthshire, was lately, if it be not still, in existence. The house, that was the usual residence of our poet, has long been in ruins. The Rev. Evan Evans, author of *Dissertatio de Bardis*, has made it the theme of his muse in the following couplet:—

"Y llwybran gynt lle bu'r gân
Yw lleoedd y ddylluan."
Lo! now the moping owlets haunt
Where erst was heard the muse's chaunt.

Ivor is numbered among the ancestors of the family of Tre*dagar.*

least, the inconvenient effects of one of these appointments was too soon apparent in the reciprocal attachment that grew up between the poet and his fair charge. The precise nature of Ivor's conduct towards the former on the discovery of this circumstance is not known; but he appears to have treated him with an indulgence which his own regard for the enamoured tutor could alone explain. He is recorded, however, to have been somewhat severe in the treatment of his daughter, whom he forthwith conveyed to a convent in the island of Anglesea. Thither she was followed by her devoted swain, who, in the humble capacity of a servant at a neighbouring monastery, consoled himself during his hours of disappointed love by offering to his mistress the tributes of his muse, all he had then to bestow; and several poems of considerable beauty are still extant, which he may be supposed to have written during this period.

THE BARD SENDS A LOVE MESSENGER TO LURE THE NUN* TO THE GROVE.

True messenger of love—away!
And from the Marches bring in May.
Thou truant! thou wert not at hand
When most the bard in need did stand
Of thy tame wings! Oh seek, once more,
The place thou visitedst of yore.
Thou of fair form and flight sublime,
Visit the damsels white as lime!

* *It seems* most probable that she had not actually become a *nun, but was* merely an inmate in the nunnery.

If, in the churchyard, thou shouldst meet
The 'Gaoler *' of the maiden, greet
(Thou poet's treasure, fair and fleet!)
Her ears with 'psalms' of all the ills
With which that maid my bosom fills!
Blessed nuns, fair saints from every land,
In their bright cells my suit withstand:
Those sacred snow-hued virgins, white
As gossamer, on mountain height;
Those maids, like swallows to behold
Those holy damsels of the choir,
Sisters † to Morvyth, bright as gold!
Oh, visit her, at my desire,
And if thy efforts vain should be,
To lure her from the priory,
And thou the snow-complexioned maid
With songs of praise can'st not persuade
Her lover in the grove to meet,
Then carry her upon thy feet—
Delude the nun who, in yon shrine,
Rings ‡ the small bell!—the abbess cheat!—
Before the summer moon shall shine,
With pure white ray, the black robed nun
To the green woodland must be won!

At length, apparently weary of his fruitless fidelity, he returned to the hospitable mansion of his patron; and the welcome manner in which he seems to have been again received, proves that his affection for the daughter had not produced any serious displeasure

* Probably the abbess is meant.

† This lady, the chief object of the poet's love and songs, will be mentioned hereafter. Anglesea was her native county, *and it is perhaps* for that reason that he calls the nuns her *sisters.*

‡ '*Clochyddes,*' an office in the Roman Catholic service.

on the part of the father, however, from motives of prudence, the latter might have thought it advisable to discountenance the attachment. The young poet seems also at this period to have been reconciled to his parents, between whose house and Maesaleg his time was divided.

During his second residence with Ivor, Davyth ap Gwilym must in all probability have devoted much attention to the cultivation of his favourite pursuit, since we find him, about this period, elected to fill the post of chief bard of Glamorgan. His poetical reputation made him also a welcome, and, in some respects, a necessary guest at the festivals which, in those long-departed days of social cheer and princely hospitality, were common in the houses of the higher orders in Wales. The mansions of Ivor Hael and Llywelyn ab Gwilym were the frequent scenes of these festive assemblies, at which particular respect was shewn to the sons of the *awen**: and here it was that Davyth ap Gwilym seems to have had the first opportunity of signalizing himself amongst his bardic compeers, in those poetical contests, formerly so frequent in Wales, and which are not even now wholly discontinued. It was at Emlyn, the seat of his uncle Llywelyn, that, on one of these occasions, the deep-rooted enmity, which existed between him and a brother bard, named Rhys Meigan, had its origin, and became the fertile source of the most satirical and even virulent strains on both sides. The

* Poetical inspiration.

laurel in this 'war of words' was, however, finally adjudged to the subject of this memoir, whose antagonist is even reported to have fallen dead on the spot, a victim to the unendurable poignancy of our poet's satire. Strange and incredible as this incident may appear, it is, in a great measure, confirmed by one of Davyth ap Gwilym's effusions, in which he alludes, with some minuteness, to the extraordinary occurrence*.

When Davyth ap Gwilym grew up to manhood, his handsome person and accomplishments rendered him a great favourite with the fair, in every part of the country. According to traditionary accounts, recorded in the age of Elizabeth, he was tall and of a slender make, with yellow hair flowing about his shoulders in beautiful ringlets†, and he says himself that the girls, instead of attending to their devotion, used to whisper at church, that he had his sister's hair on his head. His dress was agreeable to the manner of the age, long trowsers, close jacket, tied round with a sash, suspending a sword of no inconsiderable length, and over the whole a loose flowing gown trimmed with fur, with a round cap or bonnet on his head; these he took pains to make showy, for he was inclined to vie in that respect

* 'Davyth ap Gwilym's Poems,' No. 125, at the conclusion, and also the poem immediately preceding it, by Gruffydd Grug.

† This description of the bard's person is in accordance with *one which* he puts into the mouth of an apparition who appears *to warn him of his* approaching death. See the poem entitled *'The Spirit.'*

with the beaux of his time. Thus accomplished, he thought himself happier than the old Welsh princes, though they enjoyed the possession of a mansion in every district in Wales, as he fancied he might secure the affection of every beauteous maid. Every one, says our bard, has his favourite toy; and on a whimsical occasion, he tells us he was* "the toy of the fair," and his temper, full of ardour and levity as it was, naturally disposed him to make an extravagant use of the high esteem in which he stood with his countrywomen. Tradition has preserved a ludicrous instance of his frolics in this respect, which, whether authentic or not, is perfectly consistent with the powerful but reckless vein of humour that pervades his poems. The following is a brief detail of this incident.

Davyth ap Gwilym—so runs the tale—paid his addresses to no fewer than twenty-four damsels at the same time. Having an inclination, on a particular occasion, to divert himself at their expense, he made an appointment with each, unknown to the rest, to meet him under a certain tree, at a specified hour, fixing the same time for all. Our poet himself took care to be on the spot before the period of meeting, and, having ascended the tree, he had the satisfaction of finding, that not one of his faithful inamoratos failed in her engagement. When they were all assembled, feelings

* See the poem No. 88—

'Na phair ddyn deg, waneg wedd,
Grogi Dillyn y gwragedd!'

See also Nos. 103 and 158.

of inquisitive wonder took the place of the gentler emotions, to which, it is probable, they had before yielded; and, when at length the stratagem, of which they had been the dupes, became known, the only sentiment that inspired the group was that of indignant vengeance against the unfortunate bard, which they failed not to vent in reproaches loud and long. The author of the plot, who, from his ambuscade above, had perceived the gathering storm, had recourse to his muse for an expedient to allay it, or, at least, to divert its fury from the object to which it was at first directed. Emerging partially from the foliage, in which he had been enveloped, he replied to the menaces of the disappointed fair-ones,—which even extended to his life—in an extemporary stanza, of which the following translation will convey some idea:—

> Oh, let the fair and gentle one!
> Who oftest by the summer sun,
> To meet me in these shades was won—
> Let her strike first, and she will find
> The poet to his fate resigned!

The effect was such as our poet had, perhaps, anticipated. Taunts and recriminations were bandied about by the exasperated assembly, who forgot their common resentment against the bard in this new cause for commotion. The tradition adds, that the contriver of the stratagem had the good fortune to escape unmolested in the confusion of the conflict, being thus indebted to his muse for his protection from a catastrophe of no very agreeable nature.

But, whatever may have been the inconstancy of Davyth ap Gwilym in his general conduct towards the fair sex, he appears, in two instances, to have entertained a sincere and honourable passion—the objects of which, under the names of Dyddgu and Morvyth, he has celebrated in some of his choicest effusions. But, in both cases, the result was equally unpropitious, though in different ways, to the hopes he had indulged.

The fair one first named, who is represented by the bard as endowed with every grace both of body and mind, seems to have proved inaccessible to all the overtures of his heart, enforced as they were by all the fascinations of his muse *. However gratified she may have been by the offerings of the bard, she appears to have paid no attention to the adorations of the lover.

Morvyth, our poet's other favourite, received his addresses more graciously, and had it not been for untoward circumstances, over which she had no control, the event of this attachment might have equalled his most sanguine expectations. Morvyth was the daughter of Madog Lawgam, a gentleman of Anglesea, and was in every point of view the very Laura of our Cambrian Petrarch. His first interview with this lady was at Rhosyr, in Anglesea, where, by some means, he attracted her notice. He says, in a poem on the occasion, that he sent a present of wine to her, and she slighted the offer so much as to throw it over the servant who brought

* The poems to Dyddgu now extant are seven in number, *from No. 14 to 20* inclusive, in the original.

As this curious incident may suggest a very erroneous idea of the manners of that age and of the light in which such gifts were viewed in the time of the poet, the following observations, extracted chiefly from Mr. Godwin's Life of Chaucer, will serve to give a more correct impression of the spirit of the bard's first present to the lady of his love.

There is reason to believe that wine was often given, merely as a token of honour and esteem, and as being a more delicate offering than a sum of money. It is not, therefore, to be supposed that it was always intended for the consumption of the person to whom it was sent. 'I find,' says Mr. Godwin, 'a grant, or rather the confirmation of a grant, of Edward III., in the first year of his reign, to Mary his aunt, daughter of Edward I., of ten tuns of wine per annum towards her sustenance. But the Princess Mary was a votaress, and cannot be supposed to have wanted ten tuns of wine annually for her own *consumption;* and the phraseology of the grant (in subventum sustentationis suæ) seems to imply rather that it was a commodity to be *given in exchange for other commodities*, than to be consumed in kind by the grantee.'

Chaucer, who was a contemporary of our bard had a grant conferred upon him of a pitcher of wine *per diem*, to be delivered daily in the port of the city of London by the king's chief butler during the term of his natural life. This pension—for such in reality it was—is calculated by Mr. Godwin to be equivalent to an annuity of £180 in the present day*.

* Godwin's Life of Chaucer, vol. ii. p. 493.

It is necessary to observe that the wines then common in England and Wales were of a very different quality from those now in use amongst the higher classes in this country; and unless we keep this fact in view we shall be apt to imagine that our ancestors were guilty of excesses that are not imputable to them. So far back as the year 1154 (on the accession of the Platagenet race) the English government gained possession of Bordeaux and some other important districts in the south-west of France, which they retained, nearly without interruption, for three centuries. Hence this kingdom was amply supplied with the light wines of France.

The bard and Morvyth were united in a manner not uncommon in those days: they repaired to the grove with their friend Madog Benfras, an eminent bard, who exercised the sacred functions on this occasion, in the presence only of the winged choristers of the woods; one of which, the thrush—the bridegroom says—was the clerk. They now considered themselves as one, and their subsequent conduct confirmed it in every respect; but the relations of Morvyth, disliking the union, encouraged a wealthy decrepid old man, Cynfrig Cynin*, before alluded to, to become a rival of the bard; and they concerted their plan so well as to take Morvyth away from the latter, and to get her formally married to Cynfrig Cynin, agreeably to the rules of the church †. But the

* It is supposed that Cynfrig Cynin, or Bwa Bach, lived at *Brynllîn in Meirion.*

† *The poems No.* 70 to 75 treat of this event.

remainder of the life of Little Hunchback was spent in watchings and jealousy, which furnished a favourite subject for the muse of his rival*; though it proved to him also a source of endless troubles, as, considering Morvyth still his own, he missed no opportunity of procuring an interview, till, at length, he found means to run away with her†. But after strict search the fugitives were found and once more separated; and our bard, being rigorously prosecuted by Hunchback, was fined in a very heavy penalty, which being unable to pay, he was imprisoned‡. In such esteem, however, was the poet held by his countrymen, that the county of Glamorgan released him from confinement by discharging the fine. It is said that he had nearly taken Morvyth away a second time; and a friend asking him if he would again run the hazard which a step must expose him to, which had once cost him so dearly, he answered—'Yes, I will, in the name of God and the men of Glamorgan!' which expression became

* The bard seldom failed to introduce the Bwa Bach into all his poems to Morvyth after this event, particularly from No. 76 to No. 90, wherein he is placed in many ludicrous situations, and several humorous adventures are related; but it would retard our progress too much in this sketch to notice them all. Indeed the bard seems to have been so delighted with ridiculing his rival, as partly to forget his own loss, and to amuse himself by laughing even at his lost spouse. As she and Hunchback passed him by chance on horseback, on the banks of the Wye, he made a pretence of drowning himself. *See No. 74.*

† *See No. 80, 81,* and 82.

‡ *See the Poems* No. 88 and 92.

a proverb for a long time after*. We must now leave Morvyth as the lawful wife of the Bwa Bach, only observing that her faithful bard continued his attachment, and his muse was ever constant in her praise. Hence he has been compared to Petrarch; and it must be allowed that, in the fervour of his homage to the lady of his heart, the Italian poet did not surpass the Demetian Nightingale†, who composed one hundred and forty-seven poems to his beloved Morvyth!

We may take it for granted that Davyth ap Gwilym must have lived in habits of intimacy with the poets of his time, amongst whom many perhaps were to be found not insensible to the charms of the mead-horn; but he does not seem to have been much devoted to it himself, for among those who were, we find it was a custom to impose upon him when they got him into their company‡.

Davyth was equally attached to friendship and the muse—two contemporary poets were his inti-

* 'A ae ef â hi a druted fuasai iddo?'—'Af (eb ef) yn enw Duw a gwyr Morganwg!'—*David Jones o Lanfair's Collection of British Poetry*, p. 164.

† 'Eos Dyfed,' an appellation by which our bard was often distinguished by his countrymen.

‡ Y bardd oedd ar dro ymhlith ei gyfeillion mewn Gwindy, lle daeth cwsg yn orthrwm arno; a hwythau, drwy y cyfleusdra hwnnw, á dynasant ei ysgor cyfrif o'i amner, a bwriasant eu hysgor eu hunain yn ei le, i fod yn attebol am y gwin à yfesynt. Yntau wrth ddeffro á ddeallodd à ddamweiniasau, ac eb ef wrthynt—

Hyllais pan welais, hyllwyr ofer!—faith
Fyth rygnbren i'm hamner:
Hoyw fydd gwin gloyw gan glêr,
A chwerw, poen dielw, pan daler!

mate companions, each of whom wrote an elegy on his death. One was Madog Benfras, occasionally mentioned before, who had a soul congenial with that of our bard, and like him was a favourite with his fair countrywomen *. The other was Gruffydd Gryg, of Anglesea, a bard of great genius and learning †. Between Davyth ap Gwilym and the latter there appears to have been a rivalship for fame, which gave rise to a poetical contention that began in consequence of a poem written by Gruffydd Gryg, ridiculing our bard for being so great a slave to the charms of Morvyth. This dispute produced several masterly compositions, of which a specimen will be found in this collection ‡. After the contest had been carried on for a long time, and excited the attention of the whole country, though each party was unwilling to give way, one Bola Bauol laid a wager with another person that he would effect an accommodation between them. To bring about his purpose Bola Bauol went into North Wales and industriously spread a report that 'Davyth ap Gwilym, the Demetian bard, was dead.' On hearing this

* Madog Benfras, of Maelor, was the son of Gruffydd ab Jorwerth ab Einion Goch o Sonlli, ab Jeuaf ab Llywarch ab Nyniaw ab Cynwrig ab Rhiwallon ab Dingad ab Tudur Trefor, earl of Hereford.

'Ar ol rhoi o'r ail rhiain
I Fadog het fedw cain,
Gwen á roes o gae, ni rydd
Hyd efell o gae Dafydd.'

Dafydd ab Edmwnt, 1460.

† *His mother* was an Irishwoman,—'Gwyddelyn march *cregyn cryg.*'—*Iolo Goch.*

‡ *David Jones* of Lanfair had seen twenty-two of these *poems.*—*Coll. Brit. Poetry*, p. 164.

news, Gruffydd Gryg was so affected, that, forgetting every other feeling, in the poignancy of his grief he composed an elegy, bewailing the supposed loss of his rival, in the most affectionate terms. Bola Bauol having previously contrived to get a similar account of the death of Gruffydd Gryg circulated in South Wales, returned thither, and was pleased to find it had had the same effect on Davyth ap Gwilym, he having also produced an elegy on his rival. Bola Bauol succeeded according to his expectation; for the contending parties, on each discovering the real sentiments of his opponent, and being brought to a delicate dilemma, though they laughed at the stratagem which had created it, from that time became warm friends *.

Though Davyth ap Gwilym lived in an age deeply immersed in ignorance, yet it is obvious from his works that he was but little affected with the superstition of the times †. He had very little veneration for the monks; nor would he bend in the least to the authority of the priesthood in general—in those points that were derogatory to an enlightened mind. On the contrary, he took every opportunity to show that he held them in contempt and ridicule ‡; but when old age had disposed him to more serious reflections, in a confessional ode he acknowledged

* David Jones of Lanfair's Coll. Brit. Poetry, p. 173.

† The poem, No. 79, addressed to St. Dwynwen, is an admirable satire on the invocation of saints. In it the bard prays that this female saint would be his *Llatai* to procure him a *meeting with Morvyth.*

‡ *See the* Poems Nos. 64, 149, 154, 217, 224.

himself reprehensible for having rendered himself so obnoxious to the ministers of religion *.

The following whimsical extract will serve to give the reader some idea of the unlimited vituperation which the bard occasionally lavished on the religious orders of his time :—

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE BARD AND A HOLY BROTHER.

With a false form of holy life,
O'er all the wide world they are rife!
Dull friars!—(each pair of equal age
Should bear the yoke of marriage.)
With hateful strains a holy man,
A fat mouthed brother, thus began,
With pertinacious preaching bent,
On turning me from my intent;
Such was the sage advice that hung
On his discreet and brazen tongue!

HOLY BROTHER.

Remember that thou must behold
The beauteous maiden turned to mould!
And then her lovely figure must
Lose all its graces in the dust!

BARD.

No! black red man! the green sod's bloom,
The form of dark mould may assume;
But beauty's flesh and charms sublime
Must ever wear the hue of lime!

HOLY BROTHER.

For thee—the love of damsel thin,
With matchless, long, and radiant hair,
The caldron lined with fire will win,
And never-ending sufferings there!

* No. 245.

Then I replied, with language firm,
To the black visaged silent worm.

BARD.

To terrify the beauty now—
It was a most unworthy turn,
Spite of thy haughty port—thy vow—
Thy awful words—and accents stern,
Still will the gallant Davyth pay
His court to maids—ten in one day!

He begins another poem, addressed to a Grey brother, (who had tried to persuade Morvyth to become a nun,) with the following ironical allusions to the supposed merit of gifts bestowed on the religious orders :—

Long life—fair journeys—offerings rare,
Fall to the chatt'ring raven's share!
The figure like a shadow—those
Deserve not peace who are his foes!
From Rome he comes with naked feet,
And tresses like a thorny nest!
In petticoat of network dressed
He walks the world—oh, pastor meet,
A parish with wise words to greet!

Of the latter years of our bard we have only a general account, which states that they were consumed in his native parish of Llanbadarn, where also had been his paternal home. He appears to have survived his relations, his patrons, and his fair Morvyth. His uncle and kind protector, Llewelyn ab Gwilym, he had lost early in life by the hand of an assassin, and the bard bewails this event in a pathetic elegy on the occasion*. Still, so long as

* No. 232.

his generous friend Ivor survived, his house was a retreat to him from all oppression; there he was entertained like 'the three free guests in the court of Arthur*.' Indeed the poet seems to have felt the warmest affection for every member of the family of that good and hospitable chieftain.

His melancholy feelings at the loss of the friends of his youth, his patron and the lady of his love—are pathetically described in a poem in which he invokes the summer to visit Glamorganshire with its choicest blessings †. After beautifully describing that fertile region under the influence of the serene messenger, his soul becomes suddenly overclouded,—the grave of his friend is brought to his remembrance, and he concludes with an abrupt transition—(addressing the Summer)—

> And thus mid all thy radiant flow'rs,
> Thy thick'ning leaves and glossy bow'rs,
> The poet's task shall be to glean
> Roses and flow'rs that softly bloom,
> And trefoils wove in pavement green,
> With sad humility to grace
> His golden Ivor's resting place!

When Davyth ap Gwilym became oppressed with age, and a pilgrim as it were in the world, bereft of his dearest friends, he laid aside every thing unbe-

* Tri Thrwyddedog ac anfoddog Llys Arthur.

† The bard often expressed his gratitude for the generous contribution raised for him by the men of Glamorgan; and the *poems No. 93 and 11* of the original were composed *particularly on the occasion.*

ceiving his situation. In the poem entitled 'The Bard's Last Song,' he describes the altered state of his feelings:—

Ivor is gone—my friend and guide,
And Nest—my patroness—his bride!
Morvyth, my soul's delight is fled—
All moulder in their clay-cold bed!
And I oppressed with woe remain,
Victim to age and ling'ring pain!

Davyth ap Gwilym continued true to his muse even in his last moments. One of his poems—perhaps the only one—written on this impressive occasion, remains. It is entitled, 'The Death-bed Lay of the Bard,' and may, perhaps, more justly be regarded as his 'last song,' than the poem of that designation above quoted. It is full of remorse and penitence for his past life, accompanied by a strain of genuine piety, as may be perceived from the following version, however unequal in poetical merit to the original:—

My shapeless sin with dread I view,
And tremble at the reck'ning due;
I dread my folly's long career,
But, more than all, my God I fear!

Mysterious Being, prone to save,
Thy pardon for the past I crave;
The time arrives, death's awful time,
And with it come the stings of crime!

God is the world, the pious know;
Without Him all were waste below,
Without Him 'twere a desert state,
One cheerless void, all desolate!

O Thou! to whom true faith is dear,
Grant, as my parting hour draws near,
Grant, as I heave my latest sigh,
No foe may watch in triumph nigh*!

The thought expressed in the last stanza might imply that, although our poet had outlived his friends, he had not survived his enemies. It is probable, indeed, that his propensity to satire had been the means of provoking the enmity of many of his contemporaries, especially of some of the clergy, against whom the invectives of his muse appear to have been often directed †. But in a poem entitled 'The Bard's Confession of his Sins ‡,' he acknowledges the culpability of his conduct in this instance as well as in several others; and we may infer that the poem in question was composed during the latter part of his life, when old age had communicated a suitable seriousness to his meditations.

We have now arrived at the close of our bard's earthly career; and we may say of him, as of the swan, that he terminated his life with a song. But, unlike that of the swan, his tuneful talent was not forgotten at the hour of dissolution. On the contrary,

——————servatur ad imum,
Qualis ab incœpto processerat, et sibi constat.

His death (as before stated) is said to have occurred about the year 1400—in Anglesea, according to some authorities, but according to others of a more credible

* No. 246 of the Poems.
† See the Poems, No. 64, 149, 154, 217, 224.
‡ *No.* 245 of the Poems.

character, at his home in Llanbadarn. His ashes repose at Ystrad Flur, or Strata Florida, in the county of Cardigan, the burial-place of the ancient princes of South Wales; and his tomb has not wanted the congenial tribute of the muse. Some kindred spirit has recorded on it his friendship for the poet, and his regret for his loss, in an epitaph, of which the translation that follows will afford some idea:—

Gwilym, bless'd with song divine,
Sleeps't thou, then, beneath this tree;
'Neath this yew, whose foliage fine
Shades alike thy song and thee?
Mantling yew-tree, he lies near,
Gwilym, Teivi's nightingale *,
And his song too slumbers here,
Tuneless ever through the vale!

But the commemoration of his fame has not been confined to an anonymous herald. Three of our poet's most illustrious bardic contemporaries have

* In the original 'Eos Teivi:' *Eos Dyved*, however, or the Demetian Nightingale, was the designation by which our bard was frequently known. The following is the epitaph, of which a translation is here given:—

'Davydd, gwiw awenydd gwrdd,'
Ai yma'th roed dan goed gwyrdd?
Dan laspren hoyw ywen hardd,
Lle 'i claddwyd, y cuddiwyd cerdd.
'Glas dew ywen, glân Eos—Deivi,
Mae Davydd yn agos!
Yn y pridd mae'r gerdd ddiddos;
Diddawn in' bob dydd a nos!'

left elegies on his death, which bespeak at once the high estimation in which the writers regarded his talents, and the respect they entertained for his private worth *. The spirit of rivalry, which may naturally be imagined to have existed during the life of the bard, was at once extinguished by his death, or manifested itself only in the generous trophies heaped upon his tomb.

Of the merit of our poet's productions it is almost superfluous to speak: the meed of praise, awarded by his contemporaries, has received the sanction of four centuries, and Davyth ap Gwilym is still regarded as one of the most eminent of the Welsh bards, whether we estimate him by the originality of his genius, or the harmonious character of his versification. Nor should it be forgotten that he wrote at a period when the laws of Welsh poetry were in a state of considerable fluctuation, exposed to the various caprices of writers, who, having abandoned the rich and full-flowing melody of the old metres, were severally anxious to substitute in their stead their own crude inventions. Davyth ap Gwilym was among the very few that rose superior to the prejudices and disadvantages of the age; and he had the peculiar honour of establishing a style of versification which has become a model to all succeeding bards. He is likewise supposed to have introduced the *Cywydd*, a species of composition that has since his time been constantly adopted in Wales.

* The poets here alluded to were Iolo Goch, Madog Benvras, *and* Gruffydd Grug.

Independent of Davyth ap Gwilym's general merits as a poet, there is one characteristic of his versification worthy of particular notice, connected as it is in an essential manner with the genius of the Welsh tongue, and the singular structure of Welsh verse. I mean the remarkable felicity with which he generally adapts the diction to the immediate subject. Pre-eminent as the advantages are, which his materials afforded in this respect, he has availed himself of them with an effect hardly conceivable, and not to be adequately explained to one unacquainted with the Welsh language. Thus, nothing can exceed, in harmonious sweetness, some of his love-poems; while in instances of another nature, as in his description of a thunder-storm, the sound is accommodated to the sense with an appalling fidelity. Few equally successful attempts of a similar kind are to be met with in the works of any poet, ancient or modern.

* But it is not merely in the mechanism of his poetry that Davyth ap Gwilym excels. As monuments of his powerful and fertile imagination, and as pictures of the manners of the age and country in which he lived, his writings possess more commanding and permanent claims on our attention. So vividly do they reflect the prominent ideas and objects of his time, that, in the absence of historical evidence of the fact, we should feel no difficulty in referring their production to the fourteenth century.

In the time of Davyth ap Gwilym the principality

* The following remarks have, for the most part, been added *by the translator.*

had been, for nearly two centuries, under the sway of England; hence we are naturally led to expect a considerable similarity between the two countries in some respects—accompanied by a marked difference in others, arising from the preservation of those original customs of the Welsh people which had survived the conquest, and still continued to be observed, blended with several introductions of English refinement. Now this is precisely the idea of the principality that the writings of the bard are calculated to convey.

As the objects—whether of nature or of art—which then presented themselves to the attention, and the habits and opinions which then prevailed in Wales, may be regarded as the chief source of the imagery which occurs in his poems, a cursory view of this subject may, in some measure, enhance the interest of this volume.

Turning our attention first to those objects of attraction which were common to the recently united kingdoms, I may quote from Mr. Godwin's Life of Chaucer an eloquent passage which is equally applicable to the Cambro-British bard and to his great contemporary, the father of English poetry.

"The adventures of romance and the tales of the minstrels were listened to by him with avidity. Tales of chivalry, of generous enterprise, and heroic adventure had a double interest with him, because he knew that when he went forth into the world, the men of whom he read, a race that is now extinct, would be the objects of his daily observation and intercourse. The whole world was then romantic,

scenic, and sublime. The castle of the ancient baron—the magnificence of ecclesiastical edifices—the splendour of the tournament—the solemnity of religious worship, yet unstripped of any of its decorations—the troops of monks and friars devoted to the things of an invisible world—these were the objects that met the eye on every side. The mind of man was not yet broken down into a dull monotony."

No doubt exists that all these, the more splendid characteristics of the age of chivalry, were daily before the eyes of the Welsh bard. The county of Glamorgan, in which he spent the greatest part of his life, was in his time studded with proud feudal castles, and superb ecclesiastical edifices in the finest style of architecture, many of which still excite admiration even in their ruins. In the hospitable mansion of his patron he appears to have enjoyed all the peculiar amusements of that festive period. In one of the earlier poems in this volume* he thus describes his occupations at Ivor's court:—

Honors great for me are stored,
(If I live) from Ivor's hand;
Hound and huntsman at command,
Daily banquet at his board,
(Princely baron!) at the game
With his piercing shafts to aim;
And to let his falcons fly
On the breezes of the sky.

The influence of the external splendours of the Roman Catholic church is not more apparent in the

* See page 4.

pages of Chaucer than in the remains of the Cambrian bard. Her doctrines, it is true, retained but a faint and wavering hold on his understanding, but her gorgeous and varied ceremonies supplied a fund of imagery that was highly acceptable to his imagination. Illustrations and similes drawn from the accompaniments of the worship of the Roman Catholic church are profusely scattered through his writings, and allusions to her rites pervade his poetry. But these ornaments are sometimes introduced with a tone of levity that sufficiently evinces how powerfully the fancy may be affected by showy pageants which leave the conscience and the heart untouched.

The fondness displayed by Davyth ap Gwilym for the embellishments of the church forms a singular contrast with the acrimony with which he so often assails her priesthood. In the one instance we see the taste of the poet, in the other we recognise the feelings of the man. It is highly interesting to observe that the bard's fiercest invectives are directed against the eleemosynary clergy—the Franciscan and Dominican friars—who are also the object of Chaucer's bitterest satire; and in a poem previously quoted it is observable that he appears to insinuate against these orders the same charges that are advanced by his contemporary—an abject devotion to the Romish See—and hypocritical professions of religion combined with the servile arts and low frauds of the common mendicant*:—

* See the poem, p. 432. The object of his attack in that *production must* have been a Dominican friar, for he calls

With a false form of holy life,
O'er all the wide world they are rife,
False friars, &c.

Yet, notwithstanding the freedom with which the bard ridicules the immoral lives of the clergy, and the irreverence with which he occasionally treats even the rites of the church, I do not conceive that we are warranted in ascribing to him views of Christianity more enlightened than were generally entertained by the more intelligent part of his contemporaries. The fourteenth century, though signalized by the birth of Wicliffe,—whose doctrines were looked upon with no unfavourable eye by the bulk of the English nation,—was not an age in which many instances are recorded of a positive rejection of the doctrines, and a formal departure from the communion of the church of Rome. This period is remarkable rather as the era of the first awakening of the human mind, which exhibited itself in a certain vague hostility to the pretensions of the Romish see, rather than in any clear and consistent objections to its authority. The great majority even of the learned, though they had become in some measure sensible of the thraldom in which they had been so long held, had not yet acquired courage to throw off the yoke. Hence it is, that we often perceive in the literary remains of those days, that strange mixture of satire and superstition which is

him, in line 39, 'Ffriw Sain Dominig.' He terms the friar 'an old crow, always flying with his face towards heaven,' 'a brazen bell that incessantly pesters you with its noise,' &c.

so prominent a feature of the ecclesiastical allusions of Davyth ap Gwilym. In this respect, also, he bears a close resemblance to Chaucer. In their religious sentiments both these poets are in fact to be regarded rather as representatives of the views of the more enlightened men of their age, than in the light of original and independent thinkers. I may here remark that the similarity that so frequently occurs between the ideas and imagery of the Cambrian bard and the great father of English poetry, constitutes one of the chief attractions of the remains of Davyth ap Gwilym.

I shall now briefly notice those objects and customs peculiar to his native principality by which the genius of the bard must have been chiefly influenced.

In the habits of the Welsh bard of those days there was much that tended to improve and elevate the mind, and to enrich the fancy. The privilege he enjoyed of roving from mansion to mansion familiarized him with all the most romantic features of his beautiful native country; while the hospitable reception that he everywhere experienced, enlarged his knowledge of life and manners, and frequently brought him into the society of the most distinguished men of his time and country. The beneficial influence of this continual change of scene is very perceptible in the productions of our bard, whose excitable mind appears to have been thus repeatedly roused and invigorated. Without the *animating spur of* novelty, Davyth ap Gwilym, like

many other men of genius, might often have sunk into despondency under the monotonous influence of a common-place existence. We have every reason to believe that the spirit-stirring and adventurous life which he led was highly propitious to the development of his energies; most of his finest poems were evidently suggested by some novel scene or situation, and often by localities in a part of Wales very remote from his ordinary residence.

But Davyth ap Gwilym was indebted not only to the scenery and habits of his country: he undoubtedly owed much to her ancient literature. The rude but energetic lays of her elder bards—her mystical but interesting legends—and the records of the gallant deeds of her heroic kings—seem to have been deeply impressed on his memory, and to have furnished him with many a happy illustration, and many a fanciful embellishment.

Of Davyth ap Gwilym's accomplishments it is difficult to speak with certainty. His productions supply some proof of his having participated at least in the learning which that age was qualified to impart. Allusions to classical personages occur occasionally in his poems, and he frequently professes to have made the works of Ovid his study. With these attainments he united the national accomplishment of playing on the harp, which he appears to have learnt at an early age from his uncle Llywelyn ap Gwilym; and from one of his poems it is to be inferred that he delighted to contribute in this manner to the amusement of his female acquaintance.

The character of Davyth ap Gwilym has been

variously represented. From some of his writings we are in the first instance inclined to attribute to him a peculiar levity and recklessness of disposition; and undoubtedly some of his productions contain allusions repugnant to the decorous moral feeling of the present day. Some accounts, however, ascribe to him qualities of a very different description, and represent him as remarkably distinguished for the regularity of his conduct, his sobriety and gentle manners, and, above all, by an extreme reserve in conversation. Judging from an attentive perusal of the works of the bard, I cannot help believing that the favourable picture is the correct one. Compared to the generality of the productions of that time—those of Chaucer for example—the writings of Davyth ap Gwilym certainly do not present many coarse and objectionable passages, and these may with more propriety be imputed to the rude taste of a half-civilized age, than to moral depravity in the poet. To form a fair and just decision, we should balance against these scanty blemishes the grander features of his poetry—his constant and touching attachment to the lady of his love—his fervent gratitude to his patron—his patriotic veneration of the country of his benefactors—the generous warmth and playful kindness of disposition that break forth even in the wildest flights of his humour, and the most daring flights of his imagination—these, it must be remembered, are features not more characteristic of the genius of the poet than indicative of the heart of the man!

*As before ob*served, Davyth ap Gwilym has been

compared to Petrarch; and no doubt his personal history bears in one respect a strong and interesting resemblance to that of the Italian poet. But in all the peculiarities of his genius, our bard approaches more nearly to Burns than to any poet, whether of his own or other countries. He has the same originality, the same intense sympathy with nature, and, above all, the same magic transitions from satire and raillery to wild sublimity and deep pathos.

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TRANSLATIONS

FROM THE

POEMS OF DAVYTH AP GWYLYM.

TO IVOR THE GENEROUS.

This and several of the following poems contain allusions to incidents which are detailed at length in the life of the poet, by Dr. Owen Pughe, at the end of this volume. Ivor was the patron of the bard. The following translation is introduced—not on account of any poetical beauty in the ideas—but as a specimen of the style adopted by the Welsh bards in addressing their patrons.

Ivor, generous as gold,
Meek and beauteous to behold,
Yet the boldest in the fray—
Is the master I obey;
None but men of matchless might
Dare attend him in the fight!
Bounteous Ivor made the bard
Steward o'er his wealth to guard;
Chieftain, eloquent, refined,
Fierce in wrath, yet wise in mind,
To the bard a golden hoard
Is the goodness of his lord.

I, in gratitude, have sung
Praise to him with brilliant tongue;
He, my praises to requite,
Gives me " braggat" dark and bright;
I his gold will pay with fame,
And will give him Rhydderch's* name.
Armed with the armed, from battle fray
Never known to turn away,
Yet to bards a patron true,
Denizen of minstrel crew;
And to minstrelsy a slave,
Yet the sunrise of the brave.
Noblest in his pedigree,
Meekest in his piety,
Is the baron brave and free;
To his bard from distant land,
He is dear as hand to hand.
To his glory I will frame,
(Truth will never bring him shame,)
In my native tongue a lay
That shall never pass away,
Till the last of mortal birth
Shall have ceased to tread our earth,
And the summer's sun to ply
His bold journey through the sky,
Wheat to ripen, dew-drops hoar
Moisture o'er the earth to pour.
Long as ear can listen—long
As the eye can see—the tongue

* *A personage* celebrated for his generosity in ancient Welsh *tradition.*

Of the Cambrian race survives,—
Long as seed of flow'ret thrives—
Will I scatter in my lays
Seeds of glory through the land,
Of thy glory, of thy praise ;
Chief that wieldest the long brand!

The bard sends a messenger to Anglesea, from the court of his patron, Ivor the Generous, a potent chieftain in Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire, to acquaint his friends that he did not intend to return thither in consequence of the kind reception he had experienced from Ivor. This poem contains many interesting allusions to the manners and habits of the times.

Hence, my boy, thy path pursue
The bright birchen thickets thro',
(Bowers of white yet verdant hue!)
From Glamorgan bear for me
Joy to Gwyneth, land of glee.
Lov'd and native Mon salute,
Tell her I have paid my suit,
With the Psalms of Solomon,
(And not vainly) unto one
Who above fair Cardiff dwells;
That my suit has not been paid
Unto frail and feeble maid,
But that Ivor's love compels
The obedience of my soul,
With a paramount control
O'er my bosom—which the coy
Saxon girls may ne'er enjoy.

I with him my home will make,
Ne'er to towns my course will take,
Ne'er Glamorgan will forsake.
Warrior who, 'mid social throngs,
Loves the minstrel's notes and songs.
Wealthy "Hawk," all honored man,
Firm upon his battle steed;
Furious fighter in the van,
Clear of voice, sage "Hawk," in rede.
Deathless Stag! whose faithful band
Deivria never may withstand:
Honors great for me are stored,
(If I live) from Ivor's hand;
Hound and huntsman at command,
Daily banquet at his board,
(Princely baron!) at the game
With his piercing shafts to aim;
And to let his falcons fly
On the breezes of the sky.
Ev'ry melody that rings
From the harp's sweet treble strings—
Every "solo" that is sung,
His Maesaleg's* halls among—
Dice and draughts, and ev'ry sport
Of Maesaleg's joyous court—
Will the host who governs there,
Freely with the poet share.
There is none, through all the land,
Like the prince of generous hand.

* Maesaleg, or Baesaleg, Ivor's court, was in Monmouthshire.

Him I'll bless in many a lay,
(Songs his gifts cannot repay).
None are ever fearless—none
Are munificent but one;
None but he are ever meek—
Other home I'll never seek!

TO IVOR THE GENEROUS,

ON THE BARD GOING ON HIS "CLERA*" TO NORTH WALES.

In this poem the bard extols Ivor in a strain somewhat similar to the preceding poem. He thanks him for the munificence with which he had been treated during his stay at Maesaleg.

I OBTAINED from thee the gifts I desired,
Kind words and silver,
And pure gold,
And gay French arms;
Abundance of mead and wine;
Jewels fit for a second Taliesin †.

* The "Clera" was the periodical circuit made by the Welsh bards, to enjoy the hospitality of their patrons in different parts of Wales. See an Essay on Chivalry in the Cambrian Quarterly Magazine, in which is pointed out the resemblance which many of these privileges and customs of the *Welsh bards bore to* those of the Provençal troubadours.

† *Taliesin, the most* celebrated of the ancient Welsh Bards.

THE GLOVES.

The poet thanks Ivor for a present of a pair of gloves, containing a gift of money*. This poem was probably written on the same occasion as the preceding one, viz., the bard's departure from North Wales.

All who Ivor's palace leave,
Gold from Ivor's hand receive.

On the day the poet went
From his halls—the baron sent
Gloves, replete with precious store,
(To the bard) of radiant ore;
On the better hand bestowed
Gold—the left with silver glowed:
From his grasp these gloves to gain,
Maidens oft have vied in vain;
For the bard, to fair or friend,
Ivor's gift will never lend.

* It was the custom of those times to make presents of money in gloves. "When Sir John More was chancellor, in the time of Henry VIII., a Mrs. Croker, for whom he had made a decree against Lord Arundel, came to him to request his acceptance of a pair of gloves, in which were contained forty pounds in angels; he told her, with a smile, that it would be ill manners to refuse a lady's present, but though he should keep the gloves, he must return the gold, which he enforced her to receive.—*Life of Sir John More*, by Sir James Mackintosh, in *Lardner's Cyclopædia.*

He extols these gloves made of "buck-skin," as superior to gloves made of "sheep-skin," and declares he will never trust them in the possession of others, but will keep them on his own fingers. He then proceeds to express his gratitude in a strain of considerable beauty.

May for this the glories all—
That, at Taliesin's* call,
Urien Rheged's palace bless'd—
On thy mansions ever rest;
On thy hearth-stone and thy board,
In thy halls—by bards ador'd—
With illustrious children graced,
Gallant youths and virgins chaste;
Where, 'mid feasts and banquets gay,
Nobles while their lives away;
Where with constant radiance shine
Ladies of distinguished line,
In magnificent array—
And where hawks, and steeds, and wine,
Words of courtesy divine,
And bright robes of gold combine,
Ivor's splendour to display.

He concludes by extolling his "gloves" above those worn by the "surly Saxon,"—the epithet with which he generally honours the English nation—and by reiterating the praises of his benefactor.

* Taliesin addressed many of his poems to Urien Rheged, a prince of Cumberland, to whom he was bard.—*Cambro Briton.*

TO THE NUN.

This nun was the daughter of the poet's patron, Ivor. She was placed in a nunnery in consequence of an attachment that had arisen between her and the bard, while the latter was an inmate of Ivor's household.

THE dark-eyed maid my love has won,
And hence all food and rest I shun.
Oh, did my heart another prize,
None but the fool would deem me wise!
Girl of my love, and can it be,
That the luxuriant birchen tree
Of summer has no charms for thee?
That thou dost ceaselessly repeat
Thy psalter in yon still retreat?
And that, oh, star-hued maid! thou art
Of yonder holy choir a part?
Hence with the bread and water—hence
With the vile cresses—and dispense
With Pater Nosters—and give o'er
The Romish monks' religious lore:
Join not in spring the devotees,
Groves are more bright than nunneries!
Thy vows, oh, beauty, bright and mild!
With love can not be reconciled;
The ring, the cloak, and verdant dress
Are better pledge of holiness.

Haste to the knotted birchen tree,
And learn the cuckoo's piety;
There in the green wood will thy mind
A path to heav'n, O lady, find.
There Ovid's volume shalt thou read,
And there a spotless life we'll lead—
A life of liberty, where rise
The woodbines o'er the precipice.
Doubt not there too thou may'st be "shriven;"
Full "absolution" may be given;
Nor is it harder to reach heav'n,
For those who make the groves their home,
Than to the sojourners at Rome!

TO DYDDGU.

It would appear from some of the allusions in this poem that Dyddgu was of humble origin.

Thou dear perfect Dyddgu—thou lamp of my heart!
That rulest my thoughts with thy wiles and thy art;
I am none of your lovers who gravely revere
Every *nobly-born* damsel, as stiff as a spear.

I leave the mad squirrel to clamber and climb,
'Mid brushwood, and brambles, and branches sublime:
The squirrel may scramble so high up the tree
That he cannot come down—but no climbing for me!
I leave the rash sailor the ocean to sweep,
With a puny inch plank between him and the deep:
Let him rove till he tires o'er his perilous track,
A proverb of luck if he ever comes back.
The archer who aims at the target his blow,
Flings the dust from his arrow, the dust from his bow;
And rarely he poises his arrow in vain,
If he aim but aright—if he shoot but with pain.
But, poor bard! if one maiden but fall to his lot
In a thousand—alas, 'tis a mere random shot!
Thou girl with the eye-brow so auburn and thin,
Thrice happy the man who thy beauty shall win;
Thou wilt not be mine for abundance of song—
I know that thou wilt not, while thou art yet young;
But still I despair not, enchantress divine!
When nobody'll have thee, thou then shalt be mine!

In the next poem he asks the roebuck to be his love-envoy to Dyddgu, telling him that he has nothing to fear from the hounds of the "tall baron;" that if they pursue him he may hide himself in the fern. He adds, that if they carries the love-letter safe to Dyddgu he will be rewarded.

No hand shall flay thee; thou shalt live in health and joy;
Thy skin shall not be possessed by an old Saxon;

Nor shall thy horns nor thy hoofs
Fall to the lot of false Eiddig*.
Thou shalt be preserved against treachery,
With the strength of the arm of Cyhelyn†.
I will ever welcome thee,
Should I live to old age, thou
With horns like Eglantine.

TO THE GULL.

The bard asks the gull to be his love-envoy to Morvyth. Morvyth (Morfydd) was a lady to whom the poet was attached through life, and whose beauty forms the chief theme of his poems.

Bird that dwellest in the spray,
White as yon moon's calm array,
Dust thy beauty ne'er may stain,
Sunbeam-gauntlet of the main‡!

* *i. e.* Jealousy—a name applied by the bards to their rivals.

† An ancient Welsh hero.

‡ This epithet seems to imply a comparison between the gull, *with its wings* extended over the sea, to the spreading fingers *of a gauntlet.*

Soaring with aërial motion
On the surges of the ocean.
Bird of lofty pinion, fed
On the fishes of the sea,
Wilt thou not disdain or dread
Hence to learn a rhapsody—
Rhymes of praise to her whose dart
Ever rankles in my heart?
Wilt thou (lily of the sea!)
Draw near, hand-in-hand with me,
To the beauteous maiden's home;
(Nun that dwellest in the foam!)
With thy glossy figure climb
Round her castle's walls sublime.
Soon the girl of virgin hue,
On those tow'rs will meet thy view.
Tell her ev'ry rapt'rous word
Thou of her from me hast heard:
Court her glance—be polished—wise,
When on thee she turns her eyes:
Say her poet loves her more
Than bard ever lov'd before;
That a maid so pure and bright
By Taliesin ne'er was sung,
Nor wild Merddin's flatt'ring tongue.
Sea-gull, if she meets thy sight,
Tell her that I must resign
Life, if she will not be mine:—
With unequalled pangs I pine!

THE BARD INVITES DYDDGU TO THE HOUSE OF LEAVES.

Maid of dark and glossy tresses,
Humbly I request,
In Dol Aeron's* green recesses,
Thee to be my guest,
At a feast—but not of food
Fit for husbandman's repast,
Or for Saxon†—comrade rude!
Not of flesh that might supply
Nuptial festivity—
Not of mingled wheat and rye,
Meet to break a reaper's fast:—
On no other sweets we'll feed
Than the nightingale and mead!
In that room above thy head,
Birchen boughs their shelter spread,—
Beauteous spot of fairest ground,
For the deer to range around,
For grey Philomel's clear wail,
And the thrush's merry tale.
There nine trees together stand,
Mid the woods, (oh! lovely band,)

* 'Aeron' is a river in Cardiganshire; 'Dol Aeron,' or 'Dol yr Aeron,' implies the meadow or bank of the Aeron.

† Gluttony is a vice generally ascribed to the English of *those days, who* were termed "Saxons" by their Welsh neighbours.

Twined into a bright retreat,
For the birds of heaven to meet,
Forming round our leafy seat
On the earth a circle fair—
A green steeple in the air—
And, below, a glorious hall,
Made of golden trefoils all.
Noble arbour—verdant nook—
For the maid of modest look;
House by bright clear waters piled—
Waters ne'er by smoke defiled,
Place of ecstacy and song,
Of tall trees and tangled ground;
There the ousels rear their young,
There a fortress may be found—
Verdant turrets that enclose
Faithful lovers from their foes!
Wilt thou, then, or wilt thou not,
Visit me in that bless'd spot?
For thyself thou must declare,
Come—thou must—and meet me there!

THE POET'S PETITION

TO THE WAVE THAT PREVENTED HIM CROSSING THE RIVER DOVEY TO VISIT MORVYTH.

Hoarse wave, with crest of curling foam,
Back to thy native ocean roam;
And leave the fords of Dovey free,
That Morvyth separate from me!
No bard before hath loved to tell
Thy glassy tower—thy lordly swell—
Thou branch of ocean's mighty stem—
Thou sailor's friend—thou briny gem!
The storm—the rush of hostile ranks,
Jamm'd 'twixt the close and cleftless banks—
The war-steed's sinewy chest of might—
Are faint to thee, thou billowy height!
No organ, harp, no vocal tone,
Are like thy vast and fearful moan.
To her no other pledge I'll give,
The snow-white maid for whom I live,
Than call her beauty like the light,
And as thy circling waters bright!
Thou bright round billow, let me pass
Beyond thy ring of azure glass;
For long my love, awaiting me,
Stands by Lanbadarn's birchen tree.
Of sunken rocks, thou mantle hoar,
Chafed on the wild and rugged shore—

Friend of the sea—knight of the spray—
Oh, did'st thou know, for this delay,
What penalty the bard must pay,
Thou would'st not raise thy gloomy face
Between him and the trysting-place!
What though for Indeg's * charms sublime,
My limbs thy dreadful heights must climb;—
Though death were in thy eddies stern;—
Death and thy hate I'll rather spurn,
Than back from Morvyth's shore return!

[The foregoing and a few other poems in this volume have previously appeared in the "Cambrian Quarterly Magazine."]

THE CORONET OF PEACOCK'S PLUMES;

MORVYTH'S PRESENT TO THE BARD.

One glorious morn, beneath the grove,
To Morvyth many a lay I wove:—
"Maid of my heart, O twine," I said,
"One rural garland for my head;
One verdant manacle, to be
This hour of rapture's memory!"
"Dear bard, 'twere cruelty to tear
Yon lonely birch's glossy hair—
Yon anchorite chain'd the cliff along—
I'll pay with nobler gift thy song."

* *Indeg was a lady of* King Arthur's court, and a celebrated *beauty. The bard here* applies the name poetically to Morfydd.

My lady's hand my locks has set
With varied pinnacles of gold—
A proud immortal coronet,
Glean'd from the peacock's sunny fold!
To join those plumes with magic band,
Were work befitting monarch's hand—
Those gems of air—those floating flow'rs—
Those lamps to light my bardic hours—
Those tiny palaces o'erspread
With eyes—as of the mighty dead!
Ne'er shall the poet's forehead lose
The mirror of their living hues.
All things of loveliness have met,
In this my Morvyth's coronet!

A head-dress made of flowers, foliage, or the plumage of birds, seems to have been a common love-token. In another ode we find the poet thanking his mistress for a hat made of birchen branches. The poem, though not worthy of translation, contains some fine ideas, which I have extracted.

Coronet for summer skies,
I will keep thy green array,
Though in fear my footstep flies.
Fragment of the robes of May!
Charm that freest love from care,
Tent above the forehead fair;
Dawn of rare affection's art;
Beauteous symbol of the heart;
Girdle for the dresses wove
From the white locks of the grove.

MAY.

MANY a poet in his lay
Told me May would come again;
Truly sang the bards—for May
Yesterday began to reign!
She is like a bounteous lord,
Gold enough she gives to me;
Gold—such as we poets hoard—
"Florins" of the mead and tree,
Hazel flowers and "fleurs-de-lis."
Underneath her leafy wings,
I am safe from treason's stings:
I am full of wrath with May,
That she will not always stay!
Maidens never hear of love,
But when she has plumed the grove,—
Giver of the gift of song
To the poet's heart and tongue.
May! majestic child of heaven,
To the earth in glory given!
Verdant hills, days long and clear,
Come when she is hov'ring near.
Stars, ye cannot journey on
Joyously when she is gone!
Ye are not so glossy bright,
Blackbirds, when she takes her flight.
Sweetest art thou, nightingale;
Poet, thou canst tell thy tale
With a lighter heart, when May
Rules with all her bright array.

MAY AND NOVEMBER.

SWEET May, ever welcome! the palace of leaves
Thy hand for thy wild band of choristers weaves;
Proud knight, that subduest with glory and power,
Each glen into verdure, to joy every bower;
That makest the wilderness laugh and rejoice,
In the chains of thy love, in thy cuckoo's shrill voice;
That fillest the heart of the lover with glee,
And bringest my Morvyth's dear image to me.
Alas! that dark Winter thy mansions should blight,
With his chill mottled show'rs, and his flickering light;
His moon that gleams wanly through snows falling fast,
His pale mist that floats on the wings of the blast:
With the voice of each river more fearfully loud—
Every torrent all foam, and the heaven all cloud!
Alas! that stern Winter has power to divide
Each lover from hope—from the poet his bride.

WINTER.

The following is a translation of the opening lines of a poem entitled a Satire on Winter.

WINTER, icy, dark, and slow!
Ram that batterest the wood!
Never was there such a foe
To the damsel fair and good,
As the father of the snow,
Fiercely rambling to and fro,
'Mid the hamlets of our land!
Little mercy at his hand
Would that maiden's truth requite,
Who for poet's love would dare,
'Mid the snows and harrowing air,
And icicles of night.
* * * * *

THE MIST.

AT dawn, as to my love I sped,
A treacherous fog my steps misled;
Long through its labyrinths I strayed,
Then thus reviled the child of shade:—

Hence with thy yellow misty bower!
Oh, vanish for one single hour,
Thou cassock! wove by wizard spell—
Smoke of the goblin forge of hell—
Spread like the spider's filmy roof,
Veil of the skies, the tempest's woof.
The pathless snow is in thy breast—
In thee secure the felons rest.
On wings obscure, with frosty wreath,
Thou spread'st the brittle boughs of heath;
And as thou float'st, the fairy tribe
Make thy long flaggy skirts their gibe!
Fleece of the rock—cowl of the heav'n,
Thou banish'd wave from ocean driv'n;
Cloud of the crooked mountain tow'r,
Canst thou not burst one single hour?
The swarth excretion of the night
Veil'd path and heath, and mountain height,
With many a dark and mantling wave,
Till heav'n was rayless as a cave.
Hung o'er the rocks a scowling tent,
It wrapp'd heav'n's dawning battlement:
The woods, the hills, the shore, the sea,
The birchen shrubs, were lost to me.
In endless viewless swamps I fell,
In every dank and dwarfish dell;
A hundred wry-mouthed goblins cast
Mad laughter on me—as I past
An oath of hearty wrath I swore,
Yon mist should never lead me more,
The jest of fiends, through brier and brake,
E'en for my matchless Morvyth's sake.

TO THE STARS.

In one of his excursions to meet his lady love at Llanddwyn, in Anglesea (Mon), the poet was benighted and entangled in a thicket; when suddenly the stars burst forth with great splendour, and guided him safely home. In this poem he expresses his gratitude by extolling the beauty of the friendly luminaries.

Oh, I must have the wheels of May,
To guide me safely on my way,
Before I dare again to climb
The mountain precipice sublime—
Or rove amid the mountain rocks—
Or seek to quaff on yonder hill,
The mead, with her of glossy locks;
Oh, love to danger leads us still!
Last night, by reckless love betrayed,
I wandered through the midnight shade,
O'er long-ridged hills with many a moor,
And tangled thicket studded o'er;
And oft with stumbling feet I fell
O'er many a castle's ruins bare:
At last I reached the city, where
The airy elves of darkness dwell!
A vast green town, whose mansions drear
High o'er the mountain's summit peer:
Chilled with an agony of fear,
In vain I strove with sudden bound
To fly the wild and haunted ground.

Yon promontory's dusky height,
Enveloped all around in night,
Like luckless warrior whom his foes
Fiercely in hollow glen enclose,
I crossed myself and gave a cry
Of terror and of agony;
And then recalled to mind the rhyme
Of the great bard* of olden time,
Who all in white and gold arrayed,
Into the stony cauldron went:
Like him by "lack of lore" betrayed,
Was I within yon thicket pent!
My way to Llanddwyn I had ta'en,
To find a cure for all my pain.
But he on whom our faith depends,
The Virgin's Son, who watches ever,
And ever glories to deliver,
The bard in his despair befriends.
"Twelve signs†" of hope, at his command,
With showers of splendour light the land;
Brightly arose upon my sight
The stars—those jewels of the night;
Majestic splendours—sparks of seven‡
Fires that illume the saints in heav'n;
Fruits of the dim moon's glimm'rings cold,
Fair diadem, around her roll'd!

* The allusion contained in these lines is extremely poetical. Taliesin, the Orpheus of Welsh poetry, is said to have been confined in a cauldron of stone, and to have been thus initiated in the mystical lore of Druidism.

† An allusion to the twelve signs of the zodiac.

‡ *Charles's Wain.*

Omens of seasons glad and fair,
Bright signals in the heav'n displayed,
Scattered like hail-stones every where,
Like hail-stones of the sun-beams made!
Those golden treasures of the sky,
Grand coinage of the Deity;
Those chess-men clearly marked on high,
On the broad chess-board of the sky.
Tiara of heav'n's summit blue,
Far wandering pavilions—you
Till yester eve I never knew!
Praise to the gorgeous splendours! praise
To the red flow'rs that deck heav'n's ways!
Praise to the splendour that they gave,
(Those golden works!) the bard to save.
Those holy tapers pure and bright,
Conspicuous raised on yonder height,
The heav'ns—God's noblest work—to light!
Beads for repentant sinner's hand,
Brightly suspended—without band!
O'er ev'ning's broad grey sky they blaze,
Like Camlan's* hosts in ancient days!
Studs in the welkin's pillars driv'n—
Seeds that have floated up to heav'n.
In vain the blast of night aspires
To quench those bright aërial fires;
In vain their citadels to climb,
In all its wanderings sublime!

* Camlan is a river which divides Devonshire from Cornwall; on its banks was fought a battle, often alluded to by the Welsh bards, between King Arthur and his rebellious nephew, *Meddrawd, in* which both these princes were slain.

They freed my vision from its spell,
And led my steps o'er hill and dell,
Far from that sprite-frequented fell;
And pointed out the road to Mon,
The way my love-sick heart had flown.
(Alas, this wayward heart of mine!)
But not till morning did I gain,
By a long sleepless night of pain,
The palace of the maid divine.
Ah, maiden, miracle of Mon!
Again at midnight will I never
Thus rove for thee—thus strive to shiver*
With axe of wood a rock of stone.

* A kind of proverb implying a hopeless or unprofitable enterprise.

THE BARD AND THE GREY BROTHER.

Oh, could I tell the beauteous maid,
Whose palace is in yonder shade;
How fierce to-day my converse ran
With the " mouse-colour'd" holy man!
To the grey monk to-day I went,
Upon a frank confession bent;
I told him freely all: That I
Am a fantastic reckless bard,
And that a maid with coal-black eye
Possesses all my soul's regard;
And that my love is all in vain!
And that my idol with disdain
My firm affection still repays,
And ceaseless sighs and glorious lays
That spread through Cambria's land her praise!

The monk advises him to give up the maid of the " hue of the foam," and to turn to more solemn thoughts. The poet, in reply, is very abusive; he says that, notwithstanding what priests may read from " old parchment," he does not believe there is any sin in loving woman. " Three things," he adds, " are loved throughout the world—woman, fair weather, and health."

And " woman is the fairest flower even in heaven."

He thus continues :—

From heaven all joy and gladness flow;
All sadness from the depths below :
My song the sorrows can assuage
Of health and sickness, youth and age;
And natural is poesy
To me, as preaching is to thee.
And justly hospitality
Is prized by me, as alms by thee.
There is, sir priest, a proper time
Alike for sermons and for rhyme;
Verse was intended to delight,
Amid the banquet, ladies bright;
In church the Pater Nosters rise
To raise the soul to paradise.
Well did the brave Ystudfach say,
Regaling with the bardic throng,
That " plenty lives with spirits gay,"
But evil dwells with faces long !

He adds that every body can say his prayers, but very few can sing sweet stanzas! This singular poem concludes with a series of maledictions, which the monk and his penitent lavish on each other; and to which a translator cannot hope to do justice.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE BARD AND HIS SHADOW AT SUN-SET.

This poem, like the preceding, contains many sarcastic allusions to the religious orders.

As I lingered yesterday
Underneath the forest spray,
Waiting for the second Ellen,
Maid in loveliness excelling,
By the birch's verdant cowl
Shelter'd from the passing rain,
Lo! a phantom grim and foul
(Bowing o'er and o'er again
Like a vastly courteous man)
Right across my pathway ran—
I with ague tremour faint,
With the name of ev'ry saint,
Crossed myself, and thus began
To accost the polished man:

BARD.

If thou art of mortal mould,
Tell me who thou art?

SHADOW.

Behold
In this spectre form thy shade—
Why then, gentle bard, afraid?

BARD.

By the Virgin, tell me true,
On what errand?

SHADOW.

To pursue!
Thus all nakedly to glide,
Lovely poet! by thy side,
Is my task—my heart's desire—
I have feet that never tire;
And am bound by secret spell,
All thy wanderings to tell;
To espy each wile and art,
Fairest jewel of my heart!

BARD.

Vagrant, without home and shelter,
Man of limbs all helter skelter!
Crooked, lank-shanked, luckless shade—
Shape of rainbow, hue of mire,
Art thou then a bailiff paid,
By the wolf-tongued Eithig's hire,
Into all my paths to pry?
Skulking mercenary spy!

SHADOW.

That, Sir Minstrel, I deny!

BARD.

Whence then art thou, giant's child?
Shape of darkness, huge and wild;

Bald of brow as aged bear,
Bloated uncouth form of air;
More like images that scud
Through our dreams, than flesh and blood;
Shaped like stork on frozen pool,
Thin as palmer, (wand'ring fool!)
Long-shanked as a crane that feeds
Greedily among the reeds;
Like a black and shaven monk
Is thy dark and spectral trunk,
Or a corpse in winding-sheet.—

SHADOW.

I have followed sure and fleet
On thy steps—were I to tell
But one half—thou knowest well——

BARD.

Thou may'st tell, and thou may'st scan,
Pitcher-necked censorious man!
Nought of me thou can'st disclose
More than ev'ry neighbour knows;
I have never falsely sworn
In the Cwmwd court, or torn
Lambs to death—have never thrown
At the hens with pebble-stone;
Never have the spectre play'd,
To make little babes afraid;
Never yet have terrified
Stranger maid, or stranger's bride!

SHADOW.

Gentle bard, were I to tell
Half thy tricks—thou knowest well,
Soon the dainty bard might be
Swinging from the gallows tree!

THE THRUSH AND THE NIGHTINGALE OFFICIATE AS PRIESTS.

This poem contains many beautiful and fanciful allusions to the ceremonies of the Roman Catholic church. I have translated it into prose, and almost literally, as the best means of conveying the spirit of the original.

In a place of ecstasy I was to-day,
Under the mantles of the splendid green hazels,
Where I listened, at the dawn of day,
To the song of the thrush, an adept in music,
From a distant country, without delay or weariness.
On a long journey my mottled love-messenger had come,
He had travelled here from the narrow county of Chester
At the request of my golden sister, (*i. e.* Morvyth);
A noble bell* (to those who love bells) was rung,

* In this line the bells are supposed to ring for service; the bard then describes the "cassock" of the thrush, whom he imagines to officiate as priest, and the other accompaniments of Roman Catholic worship.

Its sound reached to the roof of the dingle.
His robe, from his slender waist, was
Of a thousand delicately branching flowers;
His cassock you might imagine to be
Of the wings of the ardent flapping wind.
The altar there was covered
With nothing but gold:
Morvyth had sent him,
(Metrical singer, foster-son of May!)
I heard him in brilliant language
Prophesy without ceasing,
And read to the parish
The gospel without stammering!
He raised for us on the hills there
The sacred wafer made of a fair leaf:
And the beautiful nightingale, slender and tall,
From the corner of the glen near him,
Priest of the dingle! sang to a thousand;
And the bells of the mass continually did ring,
And raised the host
To the sky, above the thicket,
And sang stanzas to our Lord and Creator,
With sylvan ecstasy and love!
I am enraptured with the song
Which was matured in the birchen grove of the woods.

TO MORVYTH.

The bard supposes himself to have died of love, and describes his funeral.

MAID with the glowing form, and lily brow
Beneath a woof of golden tresses! now
(As oft before, through years of grief and shame,
And love intense as hopeless)—I exclaim
" Sancta Maria! canst thou not redress
The torments wrought by tyrant loveliness;"
To thee I've paid the honours of a bride*,
But thy stern kinsmen's unrelenting pride
To me the nuptial presents has denied!

* *'To thee I've paid the honours of a bride,*
But thy stern kinsmen's unrelenting pride
To me the nuptial presents has denied!'

It is an old Welsh custom for each of the wedding guests to make a present to the newly-married couple. The clandestine manner in which the bard was married to Morvyth necessarily deprived him of the benefit of this usage, and as the relatives of his bride refused to give their sanction to the marriage, he had no opportunity of obtaining the usual gifts by a subsequent and more regular celebration of the ceremony. Hence his expression, that the kinsmen of Morvyth

'To me the nuptial presents have denied,'

is a poetical mode of intimating that they had refused to sanction *his nuptials* with Morvyth.

Thou gem of maids—inexorable fair,
By all the sacred relics I protest *
That when I die, the victim of despair,
On thee the guilt of poet's death will rest!
To-morrow shall I in my grave be laid,
Amid the leaves and floating forest shade,
In yon ash grove—my verdant birchen trees
Shall be the mourners of my obsequies!
My spotless shroud shall be of summer flowers,
My coffin hewn from out the woodland bowers;
The flowers of wood and wild shall be my pall,
My bier eight forest branches green and tall;
And thou shalt see the white gulls of the main
In thousands gather there to bear my train;
And e'en the very woodlands will be seen
To move and join the sad funereal scene!
The thicket of the rocks my church shall be,
Two nightingales, (enchantress, chos'n by thee,)
The sacred idols of the sanctuary!
Its altars raised of brick, its verdant floor
With nature's varied pavement chequered o'er.
Ne'er do its portals jar with angry cries,
Its leafy depths have baffled Eithig's eyes.
Skill'd are its holy monks of orders grey,
In Latin lore and in poetic lay;
In all the metres ever writ or read,
In the green volumes through the forests spread!
There, tones of organ loud and tiny bell,
By woodland minstrels waken'd, frequent swell;

* He alludes to the Roman Catholic custom of swearing *upon the relics of* the saints; the most solemn form of oath in *ancient times.*

There, where the birchen boughs of Gwyneth wave,
Proud maid! to-morrow shall I find a grave!
There, organ like, the nightingale shall roll
His notes, in solemn masses for my soul;
Orisons and "Pater Nosters" shall be said
The summer through, in honour of the dead;
Until the spirit of the bard shall rise,
Freed from its sins, aloft to Paradise!

MORVYTH'S PILGRIMAGE.

In this poem the bard imagines that Morvyth's scorn has proved fatal to him, and represents her as making a pilgrimage to St. David's, to seek forgiveness for the guilt of having caused his death.

The following translation is extracted from the poems of Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg), a Glamorganshire bard and antiquary, and one of the most illustrious of the preservers of the ancient literature of Wales.

The charmer of sweet Mona's* isle,
With death attendant on her smile,
Intent on pilgrimage divine,
Speeds to St. David's† holy shrine;
Too conscious of a sinful mind,
Yet hopes she may forgiveness find!

* 'Mona,' the isle of Anglesea.

† St. David was, in those times, reckoned the tutelary saint of Wales.

What hast thou done, thrice lovely maid?
What crimes can to thy charge be laid?
Didst thou contemn the suppliant poor,
Drive helpless orphans from thy door,
Unduteous to thy parents prove,
Or yield thy charms to lawless love?
No, Morvyth, no; thy gentle breast
Was form'd to pity the distress'd;
Has ne'er one thought, one feeling known,
That virtue could not call her own;
Nor hast thou caus'd a parent's pain
Till quitting now thy native plain.
Yet, lovely nymph, thy way pursue,
And keep repentance full in view;
Yield not thy tongue to cold restraint,
But lay thy soul before the saint.
Oh! tell him that thy lover dies;
On death's cold bed unpitied lies;
Murder'd by thee, relentless maid,
And to th' untimely grave convey'd!
Yet ere he's number'd with the dead,
Ere yet his latest breath is fled,
Confess, repent, thou cruel fair,
And hear, for once, a lover's pray'r:
So may the saint with ear benign,
Sweet penitent, attend to thine!
Thou soon must over Menai * go;
May ev'ry current softly flow,
Thy little bark securely glide
Swift o'er the calm pellucid tide.

* 'Menai,' the frith or channel dividing Anglesea from Car*narvonshire.*

Unruffled be thy gentle breast,
Without one fear to break thy rest,
Till thou art safely wafted o'er
To bold Arvonia's * tow'ring shore.
O! could I guard thy lovely form
Safe through yon desert of the storm †,
Where fiercely rage encount'ring gales,
And whirlwinds rend th' affrighted vales:
Sons of the tempest, cease to blow,
Sleep in your cavern'd glens below;
Ye streams that, with terrific sound,
Pour from your thousand hills around,
Cease with rude clamours to dismay
A gentle pilgrim on her way!
Peace! rude Traeth Mawr‡; no longer urge
O'er thy wild strand the sweeping surge:
'Tis Morvyth on thy beach appears,
She dreads thy wrath—she owns her fears;
O! let the meek repentant maid
Securely through thy windings wade.
Traeth Bychan §, check thy dreadful ire,
And bid thy foamy waves retire,

* 'Arvonia,' Carnarvonshire.

† 'Desert of the storm,' the Snowdon mountains in Carnarvonshire, supposed to be the highest in Britain.

‡ 'Traeth Mawr' (Anglicè, 'Great Strand'), in Carnarvonshire, noted for its quicksands, and the sudden flowing of its tides; the passage over it is very dangerous, and not to be attempted without a guide, which, however, the pilgrims to St. David's did in those days.

§ 'Traeth Bychan' (Little Strand), in Merionethshire, a *place equally* dangerous.

Till from thy threat'ning dangers freed,
My charmer trips the flow'ry mead;
Then bid again with sullen roar
Thy billows lash the sounding shore!
Abermo*, from thy rocky bay
Drive each terrific surge away:
Though sunk beneath thy billows lie
Proud fanes, that once assail'd the sky†,
Dash'd by thy foam, yon vestal braves
The dangers of thy bursting waves.
O! Cyric‡, see my lovely fair
Consign'd to thy paternal care;
Rebuke the raging seas, and land
My Morvyth on yon friendly strand.
Dyssynni§, tame thy furious tide,
Fix'd at thy source in peace abide;

* 'Abermo,' a dangerous rocky bay in Merionethshire.

† 'Proud fanes, that once assail'd the sky.' A very large tract of fenny country on this coast, called Cantre'r Gwaelod (*i. e.* the Lowland Canton), was, about the year 500, overflowed by the sea, occasioned by the carelessness of those who kept the flood-gates, as we are informed by Taliesin, the famous bard, in a poem of his still extant. There were, it is said, many large towns, a great number of villages, and palaces of noblemen, in this canton, and amongst them the palace of Gwyddno Garanhir, a petty prince of the country. There were lately (and I believe are still) to be seen in the sands of this bay, large stones with inscriptions on them, the characters Roman, but the language unknown. This disastrous circumstance is recorded by many other ancient Welsh writers.

‡ 'Cyric,' the patron saint of the Welsh mariners.

§ '*Dyssynni*,' a river in Merionethshire, running through a *beautiful country*.

She comes—O! greet her with a smile!
The charmer of sweet Mona's isle.
So may thy limpid rills around
Purl down their dells with soothing sound,
Sport on thy bosom, and display
Their crystal to the glitt'ring day;
Nor shrink from summer's parching sun,
Nor, chain'd in ice, forget to run.
So may thy verdant marge along
Mervinia's* bards in raptur'd song
Dwell on thy bold majestic scene,
Huge hills, vast woods, and vallies green,
Where revels thy enchanting stream,
The lover's haunt, and poet's theme.
Thou, Dyvi†, dangerous and deep,
On beds of ooze unruffled sleep;
O'er thy green wave my Morvyth sails‡.
Conduct her safe, ye gentle gales;
Charm'd with her beauties, waft her o'er
To fam'd Ceredig's§ wond'ring shore.

* 'Mervinia,' Merionethshire.

† 'Dyvi,' a large river dividing Merionethshire from Cardiganshire.

‡ 'My Morvyth sails.' It was usual for those (even females) who went from North Wales, on pilgrimages to St. David's, to pass the dangerous strands and sail over the rough bays in slight coracles without any one to guide or assist them, so firmly were they persuaded that their adored saint, as well as Cyric the ruler of the waves, would protect them in all dangers. See note p. 37.

§ 'Ceredig,' an ancient prince, from whom Ceredigion (Anglice, 'Cardigan') derives its name.

Thou foamy Rhediol*, rage no more
Adown thy rocks with echo'd roar!
Be silent, Ystwyth*, in thy meads,
Glide softly through thy peaceful reeds;
Nor bid thy dells, rude Aeron*, ring,
But halt at thy maternal spring:
Hide from the nymph, ye torrents wild,
Or wear, like her, an aspect mild;
For her light steps clear all your ways;
O, listen! 'tis a lover prays!

Now safe beneath serener skies,
Where softer beauties charm her eyes,
She Teivi's† verdant region roves,
Views flow'ry meads and pensile groves.
Ye lovely scenes, to Morvyth's heart,
Warm thoughts of tenderness impart,
Such as in busy tumults roll,
When love's confusion fills the soul.

Her wearied step, with awe profound,
Now treads Menevia's‡ honour'd ground.
At David's shrine now, lovely maid,
Thy pious orisons are paid:
He sees the secrets of thy breast,—
One sin, one only, stands confess'd,
One heinous guilt, that, ruthless, gave
Thy hopeless lover to the grave.

* 'Rhediol.' 'Ystwyth,' and 'Aeron,' rivers in Cardiganshire.

† 'Teivi,' a large river dividing the counties of Cardigan and Pembroke.

‡ 'Menevia,' in Welsh 'Mynyw,' the ancient city of St. David's, *in Pembrokeshire*. The pilgrimages to this place were, in

Thy soften'd bosom now relents,
Of all its cruelty repents,
Gives to remorse the fervent sigh,—
Sweet pity's tear bedews thine eye.
Now love lights up its hallow'd fire,
Melts all thy heart with chaste desire:
Whilst in thy soul new feelings burn,
O! Morvyth, to thy bard return;
One tender look will cure his pain,
Will bid him rise to life again,
A life like that of saints above,
Ecstatic joy, and endless love.

those times, esteemed so very meritorious, as to occasion the following proverbial rhyme in Welsh:—

Dôs i Rufain *unwaith. ag i* Fynyw *ddwywaith,*
Ar un elw cryno a gai di yma ae yno.

And in Latin:—

Roma *semel quantum, bis dat* Menevia *tantum.*

Would haughty popes your senses bubble,
And once to Rome your steps entice,
'Tis quite as well, and saves some trouble,
Go visit old Saint Taffy twice.

THE THUNDER.

WHEN she met me in the glade,
In the leaves of spring array'd,
Well did Morvyth compensate
For my dreary watchings late.
O'er our verdant couch of state
Woodland music ever hung,
By the thrush and cuckoo sung:
But in this ecstatic hour,
The hoarse thunder sudden roar'd,
And in many a furious shower
The clear rain-drops downward pour'd;
The fierce lightning frequent glared.
By the ruthless tempest scared,
In an agony of dread,
From the grove my Morvyth fled!
Beaked flame! dread living thunder,
Rending lovers' hearts asunder;
Sound of danger and of fear
To the beauteous maiden's ear;
Noise that all the nations hear;
Clamour that the senses mocks,
Hoarse bull raging 'mid the rocks;
Clanging armour of the heav'n,
Fire and wave in conflict driven;
Flame of wrath, and waves that tame,
By their mighty gush, the flame;

Giant echoes of dismay,
Trumpet of the whelming spray,
Like a thousand voices blending,
From the stars of heav'n descending;
Like the crash of forests hurl'd,
From the welkin to our world.

He then becomes, in his peculiar manner, very abusive against the thunder, compares it to the Rhuglgroen (an instrument used for frightening crows), and to an old hag beating her kettles about; he adds that he should not have cared for its vile noise had it not scared Morvyth from his side.

THE CUCKOO'S TALE.

The cuckoo brings the tidings of Morvyth's marriage with Hunchback. The bard describes himself as waiting, at the dawn of day, under a precipice for the arrival of Morvyth. Seeing the cuckoo, he thus addresses that bird.

HAIL, bird of sweet melody, heav'n is thy home;
With the tidings of summer thy bright pinions roam—
The summer that thickens with foliage the glade,
And lures to the woodland the poet and maid.
Sweet as 'sack,' gentle bird, is thy beautiful voice,
In thy accents the lover must ever rejoice;
Oh! *tell me* at once, in thy musical lay,
Where tarries the girl whose behest I obey.

" Poor bard," said the cuckoo, " what anguish and pain
Hast thou stored for thyself! all thy cares are in vain!
All hopes of the maid thou awaitest resign,
She has wedded another, and ne'er can be thine."

The poet angrily replies that this is impossible—that Morvyth was solemnly united to him in the presence of the bard, Madog Benfras, who united their hands under the branches of the forest; and abuses the cuckoo. The cuckoo retorts by repeating her story, and declaring that Morvyth is now the wife of Hunchback. The poem thus concludes.

" For the tale thou hast told"—to the cuckoo I cried,
" For thus singing to me of my beautiful bride
These strains of thy malice—may winter appear
And dim the sun's light—stay the summer's career;
With frost all the leaves of the forest boughs fill,
And wither the woods with his desolate chill,
And with cold in the midst of thy own forest spray,
Take thy life and thy song, foolish cuckoo, away!"

TO MORVYTH,

WHEN SHE MARRIED HUNCHBACK.

Too long I've loved the fickle maid,
My love is turned to grief and pain ;
In vain delusive hopes I stray'd,
Through days that ne'er will dawn again ;
And she, in beauty like the dawn,
From me has now her heart withdrawn !
A constant suitor—on her ear
My sweetest melodies I pour'd ;
Where'er she wander'd I was near ;
For her whose face my soul ador'd
My wealth I madly spent in wine,
And gorgeous jewels of the mine.
I deck'd her arms with lovely chains,
With bracelets wove of slender gold ;
I sang her charms in varied strains,
Her praise to every minstrel told :
The bards of distant Keri know
That she is spotless as the snow !
These proofs of love I hoped might bind
My Morvyth to be ever true :
Alas ! to deep despair consign'd,
My bosom's blighted hopes I rue,
And the base craft that gave her charms,
Oh, anguish ! to another's arms !

He adds that he does not know whether she was induced to desert him by fraud or by violence; but that, in either case, he is equally undone.

In another poem he again reproaches her with inconstancy and ingratitude, declaring that, like the cuckoo, he has had only one song—the name of Morvyth.

SATIRE

ON THE LITTLE HUNCHBACK, OR EITHIG.

Hunchback was a rich but deformed person, whom Morvyth had been forced to marry by her relations. He was the chief object of the poet's satire.

GRIEF is every day my lot,
For her who regards me not;
Essyllt's * mien, but Eithig's treasure,
I have spent firm love's full measure
On cheeks whence I cannot wile,
Fickle beauty! one sweet smile.
'Jaoler' will not let me win
Her of eyebrow fine and thin.
If she seeks the social throng,
The abortion comes along;

* Essyllt was a celebrated beauty. He says that Morvyth is like Essyllt in beauty, but that she is in the power of Hunch*back.*

Oh! that such a sordid elf
Should possess her to himself!
Old—too old for mirth and joys,
All delight the churl destroys!
Cuckoo, nightingale, he mocks,
Hates the linnet as the fox;
Never honours with his love
Rhymes and nuts and glimm'ring grove;
May's dwarf warblers' notes to hear,
Would his very bosom sear,
And the thrush's conversation
Is his very detestation!
Wretch—decrepid—harp or hound,
Love from Eithig never found!
Eithig, with the livid face,
Like a man of Irish race.
Him I will remember well,
Hate him more than I can tell;
Never will I pay my vows
But to her he calls his spouse.
When she dies—upon the maid
Earth and stones and withes be laid;
Sods—eight oxen load I'll pour
(Borrowed oxen) on the boor;
In my own paternal field,
Him his length of earth I'd yield.
'Beauty' then shall be my mate,
While Siluria's churl in state,
In his ditch and hempen clothes,
On his steed of alder goes*.

* 'On his steed of alder goes.' He means his coffin.

Oh! if I had but my way,
Would the ruffian live a day?
If he were in earth array'd,
Should I sorrow—would the maid?

THE DREAM.

The bard is visited by a terrific vision. He awakes, and deplores Morvyth's marriage with Hunchback.

As yester eve I journey'd late,
To shun the edged and naked blast,
Amid the fern my limbs I cast,
And as I lay it was my fate
(The earth my couch, the grove my bower,)
To fall asleep—I slept an hour.
And there I saw a dream of fear:
Sudden my place of slumber near
A pallid flood appears to quiver,
And rolling on to threat me seems
With billows mighty as the streams
That rise in Taf's o'erflooded river;
Like bulls, in fury and in might,
The breakers seem intent to mite;
Out from a hundred glens they speed;
Then was I desolate indeed!

Into the billows rough and wild
I fell, with many a frantic call—
Hoar-headed billows steeply piled—
Alas! it was a dreadful fall!
And with the breakers fierce and strong
I buffetted and struggled long;
And oft I prayed to Christ to save
And give me strength against the wave.
But ceaseless struggles robbed at length
My heart of hope, my limbs of strength;
My breast the rocks of ocean tore,
And ocean's host of billows hoar.
I saw the day-light disappear,
And night with hideous gloom draw near;
The wind with loud and wrathful shout
Waged battle with the deluge stout.
I rode upon the billow's breast,
Until at last, by waves oppressed,
I sunk as evening closed around,
And death amid the darkness found.
At dawn awaking from the pain
And terror that had racked my brain,
With mournful heart I learned too well
The meaning of that dream to spell.
Long years a constant suit I've paid
To Morvyth, the ungrateful maid*.

* * * * *

Oh! I could read the vision well!
Her kindred heartless hostile men,
These are the floods that on me fell
From every hill and hollow glen;

* *A number* of lines containing a mere repetition of his *grievances are* here omitted.

These are the waves I had to fight
In that dread vision of the night!
And still, fantastic fool! I tread
Too deep, too deep, as in the dream;
A weight of waters o'er my head,
Still strive to swim against the stream!
Again I'll plunge—but not in sleep—
For ever in Taf's billows deep!

TO THE WIND.

The bard asks the wind to be his envoy to Morvyth, the lady of his love. This poem appears to have been written when the poet was imprisoned by the influence of Morvyth's relations, in consequence of his having rescued her from Hunchback, (see the Life of Davyth ap Gwilym at the end of this volume). This circumstance gives great beauty to the contrast which the poet draws between his own situation, and the liberty and irresistible power of the element he addresses.

Bodiless glory of the sky,
That wingless, footless, stern and loud,
Leap'st on thy starry path on high,
And chauntest 'mid the mountain cloud;

Fleet as the wave! and fetterless as light!
Tell to my body's heart, "mine is the dungeon's night!"
My beauteous native land to me
Is lost—as to the blinded sight;
But despot may not grapple thee,
Thou mock'st the falchion's gleamy might,
And laugh'st, amid the citadels of morn,
The shield of pathless rock and frenzied flood to scorn!
Wind of the North! no craft may chain,
No brand may scorch thy goblin wing;
Thou scatterest with thy giant mane
The leafy palaces of Spring;
And as the naked woodlands sink and soar,
Liftest thy anthem 'mid a thousand forests' roar!
Phantom of terror and delight!
Thousands have heard thy airy feet,
When with wild boyhood's playful sleight
Thou fling'st the breakers' tiny sleet;
Or o'er the storm—the oak's dismantled height,
Seekest thy couch of waves unsearchable as night!

THE SWORD.

SHAPELY burden of my hand!
Foul disgrace is never nigh,
When I clasp my long bright brand,
Girt by Heaven upon my thigh:
Proud protector in the fight,
Ranging fierce, and wild and bright.
One there is my heart detests,
Songs and songsters he infests
With a cunning enmity;
Fat and taciturn, and foul,
Oxlike in his heavy scowl,
And his rank obesity:
Now with silent frowns he tries,
Now with threats, the bard to scare.
Wrathful weapon, noble prize!
While my hand thy blade can rear,
All his terrors I defy!
Cold at midnight may I lie,
If on charger I retreat
From yon wretch, or on my feet!
Shall we not our vengeance claim
On that man of hate and shame—
Eithig—who so foxlike knows
How to skulk before his foes,

Scourge and spoiler of the maid?
Come with me, my trusty blade;
Brightest shingle of my roof,
As the rock thou art rust proof!
In the turmoil of the fight,
Beauteous omen of delight
To the ravens—from thy blade
Shrink Deira's hosts dismayed;
Double-lip'd, and beaked with ire,
Like the lightning's edge of fire!
In thy hollow sheath repose,
My defender from my foes.
Whereso'er thy master's hand
Plunges with thee, brilliant brand,
Despot of the battle ground!
Thou a path for him hast found.
Should some foes in secret dwell
In the forest citadel,
Thou shalt flame, impetuous steel,
Wildly as the mimic wheel,
Which the nurse, from brand on blaze,
Whirls before her infant's gaze.
Should the foeman cross my path,
E'en Cyhelyn's shield would fail
To protect the foe from scath;
Should my sword his life assail,
Thou shalt save me, rapier good,
From the hornets of the wood.
Many a long, long holiday,
Through the woodlands I will stray;
In the forests will rejoice,
With the lady of my choice;

Though, whilst in the woods I stray,
All my riches melt away,
And my friends indignant say,
They my steps too oft behold
Near the bank that keeps my gold.
Gentle maid, a gen'rous mind,
To its love is ever kind!

TO THE SHIP

In which Hunchback sailed to France in company with a detachment of three hundred men, under the command of Rhys Gwgan, to join the army of Edward III. in that country. The bard expresses a wish that Hunchback may be drowned on the voyage.

The following extract from Dr. Lingard's History of England furnishes an interesting comment on this poem:—"Among them (*i. e.* the foot soldiers of Edward III.'s army) was constantly a large proportion of Welshmen armed with lances, and dressed in uniform at the king's expense. These proved of great utility wherever the country was mountainous and ill adapted to the operations of cavalry. The muster-roll of the army which besieged Calais is still extant; it included 4474 Welsh foot; each man received fourpence a day, which was double the pay of the rest of the infantry, which was only twopence per man."

To-day on high achievement bent,
With Rhys to join the wars he went,
And radiant Morvyth's kin lament—
Whilst I upon the Virgin call,
From the fierce shock of France to save
The barons bold, and warriors brave,
That marched from Cambria—may they all
(Brethren in battle—ever first
Through breach in hostile walls to burst)
Home from the South return—save one!
Thou last, a drone, O Gwgan's son!
Amid thy proud and warlike guard,
If thou retainest in thy band

The odious foe of Morvyth's bard,
And all the bards of all our land.
How oft with indignation sore
I've fled the hunchbacked elf of yore,
Humped like the crooked elder tree,
The tyrant of the maid and me!
Yon wild grey ship chafed by the tide,
If e'er the sluggard mount her side,
If e'er she take her watery road
With such an inauspicious load,
Alas! her flowing sails will sink,
Deeply of ocean's brine to drink,
The spiral surges of the sea
The raiment of her masts will be!
Fling from her deck the luckless thing,
And let the swine-souled monster sleep
Beneath the quicksands of the deep!
O generous billow, ocean's wing!
Soon wouldst thou pay the debt I owe
To Jealousy, the poet's foe.
Like bird of ocean he would whirl
From wave to wave, and shoal to shoal,
As the wild surges fiercely curl
Around the shores, O sordid soul!
May Hwynyn, demon of the sea,
Thy headsman on the voyage be!
Oh, Rhys! illustrious warrior, thou
Mayst free me from my foeman now;
Let not the hollow boat divide
The poet from his glorious bride* :

By this expression he alludes to the return of Hunchba

And thou, cross-bowman true and good,
Thou shooter with the faultless wood,
Send me an arrow through his brain,
(Who of his fate will e'er complain !)
Then from thy quiver take and aim
A second arrow through his frame ;
Well will the varlet's corpse be known
By the stiff beard so scantly sown ;
Haste ! with thy stirrup-fashioned bow *,
To lay the hideous varlet low !
Long may he roam on distant shore—
Ill luck attend upon the boor ;
The poet's anger will not burn,
E'en should he ne'er again return !
To-night the lady of my choice
With me will laugh, with me rejoice ;
With me confess, with me will pray,
That Eithig of malignant tongue,
The churlish foe of joy and song,
In foreign realms may ever stay.

* ' Stirrup-fashioned bow'—the cross-bow, of which this epithet is very descriptive.

THE ECHO ROCK.

The bard accuses the echo of having prevented him from meeting Morvyth.

Yon old bald rock and rugged stones,
That peer and totter o'er the dell,
And murmur forth unearthly tones
Like some base witch that casts a spell,
Babble more wildly after rain
Than seven-locked Merddin* the insane!
As that loquacious summit near
I watched for Morvyth to appear,
By those delusive tones betrayed,
Our footsteps far asunder strayed;
Like old Hu Gadarn's oxen twain†,
I called to her—and she to me—
But still, with wicked mimickry,
That traitor answered us again;
And to the softest tones I sighed,
He still perfidiously replied:
And thus we failed, "my golden glaive,"
To meet beside the mountain cave.

* 'Merddin Wyllt,' or 'Merddin of the seven locks,' an ancient Welsh poet who was at times affected with madness in consequence of having killed his nephew.

† This is an allusion to an old Welsh mythological story, that a personage of the name of Hu Gadarn caused a deluge to *subside by dragging* a beaver out of the waters with two 'hump-*backed' oxen.*

O lady, of thy voice beware!
In yonder rocky citadels
A profligate pretender dwells,
Who fabricates thy accents there.
Yon bellowing crag with trumpet's voice,
Bare as the ramparts of the sky,
Hob-goblins in its depths rejoice,
Or dogs amid its caldrons cry.
Its tones are like the scream of pain
Of gander, by the nightmare slain,
Or the hoarse wailing of a hound
Within a stony vessel bound,
Or hag that strives with hollow sound
To terrify the country round,—
Disastrous voice, perfidious guide,
That kept me from my lady's side!

THE MOON.

THE MOON HIS LOVE ENVOY, OR GUIDE TO MORVYTH.

Ah, woe is me! I long to roam
Far as the foam-hued lady's home;
But how, alas! can I command
A guide to that far distant land?

I am too poor—I cannot pay
A youthful guide for that long way.
A withered beldame's footsteps slow,
Cold-blooded wretch! I will not hire,
Nor journey with a lamp of fire
At night, or waxen flambeau's glow.
I love not thus at night to stray,
And sleep at home the livelong day;
How can the beauty recognize
Her bard, when darkness veils the skies!
To me the candles will be giv'n
Of him who rules above in heav'n,
To guide me safely through the night—
My path to Morvyth's home to light!
Praise to the great Creator's name,
Who made that sparkling orb of flame,
Nought has he dress'd in lovelier rays
Than that round star so small and clear.
Candle of God, whose golden blaze
Illumes the land to me most dear,
From me nor treachery nor time
Can snatch thy guardian light sublime!
Nor autumn's blast at random driv'n,
Blessed "wafer" lifted up in heav'n*!

* Blessed 'wafer;' he compares the moon to the sacred wafer or host of Roman Catholic worship. A few of the last lines of the original are omitted from the translation.

THE PEAT POOL.

The bard, on returning from a visit to Morvyth, falls into a pool amongst the peat bogs.

Woe to the bard who, far astray,
Moans o'er his errors with dismay!
Dark is the night upon the shore—
All dark upon the mountain moor—
All—all is darkness far and near—
(Oh, madness, thou hast brought me here!)
Dark is the treacherous earth to-night,
And dark the young moon's orb of light!
Oh that the maid of glorious hue,
The gloom of this black midnight knew;
And that the bard who sings her praise,
In the keen blasts of darkness strays!
Oh, luckless hour! Oh, wayward thought!
That to this pass his footsteps brought,
And far from home, on hostile ground,
Him and his dappled steed have bound;
And worst of all, that such a fate,
Him journeying homeward should await,
With lady's tenderness elate!
It was a grievous fate, indeed,
That plunged the poet and his steed

Into this gulf upon the heath,
This fishing-pond of Gwyn ap Neath*;
Abyss that glen and mead divides—
This palace of the elfin race—
" Lake vinegar," with bay-hued tides,—
The foul swine's fav'rite bathing place!
I spoiled with mud my stockings there,
My " kersey" stockings brought from Caer†.
Oh, sad disgrace! Oh, shame decreed!
In this dark swamp to bard and steed!
Cold breezes pinch him for his pains,
Who dug this pond in sunlight clear‡;
If e'er firm land the bard regains,
He'll never send his blessing here!

* 'Gwyn ap Neath,' the Faery King.

† 'Caer,' applied to many places in Wales, as Caernarvon, Caermarthen; also, and most properly, to Chester.

‡ The pond into which the poet fell was an accumulation of water in one of the hollows from which peat had been dug during the season of the year usually employed for that purpose.

THE SWAN.

The bard asks the swan of Llyn Syvaddon (Anglice, Brecknock Mere), a lake near Brecon, to be his love envoy.

Thou swan, upon the waters bright,
In lime-hued vest, like abbot white!
Bird of the spray, to whom is giv'n
The raiment of the men of heav'n;
Bird of broad hand, in youth's proud age,
Syvaddon was thy heritage!
Two gifts in thee, fair bird, unite
To glean the fish in yonder lake,
And bending o'er yon hills thy flight
A glance at earth and sea to take!
Oh! 'tis a noble task to ride
The billows countless as the snow;
Thy long fair neck (thou thing of pride!)
Thy hook to catch the fish below;
Thou guardian of the fountain head,
By which Syvaddon's waves are fed!
Above the dingle's rugged streams,
Intensely white thy raiment gleams;
Thy shirt like crystal tissue seems;
Thy doublet, and thy waistcoat bright,
Like thousand lilies meet the sight;

Thy jacket is of the white rose,
Thy gown the woodbine's flow'rs compose* ;
Thou glory of the birds of air,
Thou bird of heav'n, oh, hear my pray'r!
And visit in her dwelling place
The lady of illustrious race:
Haste on an embassy to her,
My kind white-bosomed messenger—
Upon the waves thy course begin,
And then at Cemaes take to shore ;
And there through all the land explore,
For the bright maid of Tal y llyn,
The lady fair as the moon's flame,
And call her " Paragon" by name ;
The chamber of the beauty seek,
And mount with footsteps slow and meek ;
Salute her, and to her reveal
The cares and agonies I feel—
And in return bring to my ear
Message of hope, my heart to cheer !
Oh, may no danger hover near
(Bird of majestic head) thy flight!
Thy service I will well requite!

* These words 'doublet, jacket,' &c. are English words applied sportively by the poet.

THE BARD

DECLARES THAT HUNCHBACK (EITHIG) HAS DESTROYED MORVYTH'S BEAUTY BY HIS BREATH.

It is my purpose to resign
The girl of clear and brilliant cheek,
And gestures modest, kind, and meek—
With grief so fearfully I pine,
That all my powers of mind decline!
The world will deem me wise to shun
The maid who in the birks was won,
And to renounce my hopeless suit,
It is a labour without fruit;
For her complexion's radiant glow,
With deep intensity of woe,
Has been discoloured long ago!
I can not nerve with strength the weak—
And who can beautify the cheek?
For sickness, and, alas! for care,
She never can again be fair;
The smoke from Eithig's mouth that reeks
Such havoc, on her features wreaks,
And, like the fumes of burning peat,
Sullies soft Enid's * features sweet!

* '*Enid*,' the name of a celebrated beauty, often applied *poetically by* Davyth ap Gwilym to Morvyth.

An image of frail alder made,
By Saxon workman soon decays,
Robbed of its varnish—if displayed
By the full lamp's polluting blaze ;
The cloth of England soon is soiled
By the peat fire—the sun is spoiled
By mists that gather in the sky
Of all his power and brilliancy ;
A chair of oak—high soaring tree—
Crumbles to dust beside the sea !
When brightest shone her mien divine,
A transient stewardship was mine,
But in her charms—O fatal chance !
I have not an inheritance !
Well does the wretch know how to mar
Features as fair as Morvyth's are !
Eithig, the dark, cold, ruthless wight,
Would rather that they were not bright ;
Still with his mouth's destructive haze
He blasts her beauty's radiant blaze !
With bitterness of heart I mourn
Her faded form by anguish worn ;
But worn and blighted, shrunk and sear,
Still will that form to me be dear !
God and St. Cadvan save her still,
In this extremity of ill ;
In truth, she wants heav'n's guardian care,
In this her need—she was too fair !

BARDIC CONTROVERSIES.

THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN DAVYTH AP GWILYM AND GRYFFYTH GRYG.

This poetical dispute consists chiefly of terms of abuse; the following, however, the first poem by Gryffyth, has some naïveté and humour, and may serve as a specimen of the style in which these poetical quarrels were carried on.

GRYFFYTH GRYG'S SATIRE ON DAVYTH AP GWILYM.

This sad and simple bard of ours,
In song—a thousand sorrows kill him,
Despair o'er all his visions lowers,
And yet—he lives—the sweet ap Gwilym!
Still lives, and woos, and loves, and sings:
And though he suffers ten times more
Than Cambrian e'er endured before—
No sickness stops his carollings!
Pangs, numerous as the stars of night,
Consume the body of the wight!
And yet this tuneful man of sorrow,
From love—draws every pang and pain,
And thus, though slain to-day—to-morrow
He lives to groan and grieve again!

This warrior, against arms more stern
Than Morvyth wields, his fame must earn!
Were he—as oft he boasts in sighs—
A man of martial enterprise,
With goodly shaft and steady bow
His love and chivalry he'd shew!

The following poems, which were originally published in the Cambrian Quarterly Magazine, may serve as a more interesting specimen of the poetical quarrels of the Welsh bards.

CONTROVERSY BETWEEN TWO BARDS, THE LOVERS OF GWEN OF DOL.

Two bards were in love with this lady; one of them sent a peacock to her as a 'llatai,' or love messenger. As soon as his rival gained intelligence of this, he addressed himself to the fox in a strain, of which the following is an imitation, entreating him to murder the peacock.

TO THE FOX.

Most dainty thief, with dusky tail,
Wouldst thou on choicest food regale—
In lonely grove romantic dine—
To Dol thy lordly limbs incline!
Plump ducks thy crafty taste have fed
(As well thy dignity becomes);

All birds that skim the mountain's head
Please thy white paunch and lordly gums;
Though wisdom dwells in thine own yellow sconce,
Yet, reynard, list to friendly tale for once:
The beauteous Elen* of my heart,
Fair as the waxen forms of art,
I love with all devotion true—
But, ah! another loves her too!
A rival—mid wild Snowdon dwelling,
A minstrel of his Awen† vain,
But still a bard, most bards excelling,—
Of him, sir envoy, I complain!
Dog of the earth, three choicest geese,
With a good lamb of fairest fleece,
To thee I'll give—then mid the fern,
By Dol thy wages neatly earn;
But be penurious of thy sounds,
Beware of Eithig‡ and his hounds!
And when the worm-fed bird appears,
Then homeward chase from grove to grove,
And seize and slay with dental sheers,
The bright deluder of my love!

* Elen, the Roman British empress; her name is often poetically applied to the ladies of their love by the bards.

† 'Awen,' poetical inspiration.

‡ 'Eithig,' jealousy, applied by the bards to their rivals.

It would appear that the fox faithfully performed his commission; for Rhys Goch of Eryri, or Red Rhys of Snowdon, the other bard, has left us an ode in which he abuses the fox for killing his peacock. This poem is composed of such harsh sounds, that Sion Tudur, another bard, humorously termed it the 'Shibboleth of Sobriety,' because no man, when drunk, could possibly pronounce it.

RHYS GOCH TO THE FOX.

THE wretch, my starry bird who slew,
Beast of the flameless embers' hue!
Assassin! glutton of the night,
Mixed of all creatures that defile!
Land lobster! fugitive of light,
Thou coward mountain crocodile!
With downcast eye and ragged tail,
That haunt'st the hollow rocks,
Thief, ever ready to assail
The undefended flocks!
Thy brass-hued breast and tattered locks
Shall not protect thee from the hound,
When, with unbaffled eye, he mocks
Thy mazy fortress under ground;
Whilst o'er my peacock's shattered plumes shall shine
A fretted bower of brightest eglantine!

FROM THE BARD'S

ADDRESS TO A BIRCH TREE,

THAT HAD BEEN CONVERTED INTO A MAY-POLE IN THE TOWN OF LLANIDLOES, IN MONTGOMERYSHIRE.

Ah ! birch tree, with the verdant locks !
And reckless mind—long hast thou been
A wand'rer from thy native rocks;
With canopy of tissue green,
And stem that mid the sylvan scene
A sceptre of the forest stood—
Thou art a traitress to the wood !
How oft, in May's short nights of old,
To my love-messenger and me
Thou didst a couch of leaves unfold !
Thou wert a house of melody,—
Proud music soared from every bough ;
Ah ! those who loved thee sorrow now !
Thy living branches teemed and rang
With every song the woodlands know,
And every woodland flow'ret sprang
To life—thy spreading tent below.
Proud guardian of the public way,
Such wert thou, while thou didst obey
The counsel of my beauteous bride—
And in thy native grove reside !

But now thy stem is mute and dark,
No more by lady's reverence cheered;
Rent from its trunk, torn from its park,
The luckless tree again is reared—
(Small sign of honour or of grace!)
To mark the parish market-place!
Long as St. Idloes' town shall be
A patroness of poesy—
Long as its hospitality
The bard shall freely entertain,
My birch! thy lofty stature shall remain!

THE GROVE OF BROOM.

THE girl of nobler loveliness
Than countess decked in golden dress,
No longer dares to give her plight
To meet the bard at dawn or night!
To the blythe moon he may not bear
The maid, whose cheeks the daylight wear—
She fears to answer to his call
At midnight, underneath yon wall—
Nor can he find a birchen bower
To screen her in the morning hour;
And thus the summer days are fleeting
Away, without the lovers meeting!
But stay! my eyes a bower behold,
Where maid and poet yet may meet,
Its branches are arrayed in gold,
Its boughs the sight in winter greet
With hues as bright, with leaves as green,
As summer scatters o'er the scene.
(To lure the maiden) from that brake,
For her a vesture I will make,
Bright as the ship of glass of yore,
That Merddin o'er the ocean bore*;

* '*Bright as the ship of glass of yore,*
That Merddin o'er the ocean bore.'

'Merddin,' or 'Merlin,' is said to have crossed the ocean in a magic ship made of glass.

O'er Dyved's hills there was a veil
In ancient days*—(so runs the tale) ;
And such a canopy to me
This court, among the woods, shall be ;
Where she, my heart adores, shall reign,
The princess of the fair domain.
To her, and to her poet's eyes,
This arbour seems a paradise ;
Its every branch is deftly strung
With twigs and foliage lithe and young,
And when May comes upon the trees
To paint her verdant liveries,
Gold on each thread-like sprig will glow,
To honour her who reigns below.
Green is that arbour to behold,
And on its withes thick showers of gold !
Joy to the poet and the maid,
Whose paradise is yonder shade !
Oh ! flowers of noblest splendour, these
Are summer's frost-work on the trees !
A field the lovers now possess,
With saffron o'er its verdure roll'd,
A house of passing loveliness,
A fabric of Arabia's gold—
Bright golden tissue, glorious tent,
Of him who rules the firmament,
With roof of various colours blent !

* *'O'er Dyved's hills there was a veil*
In ancient days.'

This seems to refer to some obscure tradition.

An angel, mid the woods of May,
Embroidered it with radiance gay—
That gossamer with gold bedight—
Those fires of God—those gems of light!
'Tis sweet those magic bowers to find,
With the fair vineyards intertwined;
Amid the woods their jewels rise,
Like gleam of starlight o'er the skies—
Like golden bullion, glorious prize!
How sweet the flowers that deck that floor,
In one unbroken glory blended—
Those glittering branches hovering o'er—
Veil by an angel's hand extended.
Oh! if my love will come, her bard
Will, with his care, her footsteps guard,
There, where no stranger dares to pry,
Beneath yon Broom's green canopy!

THE OWL

DISTURBS THE BARD'S SLEEP.

WRETCHED owlet! worthless bird!
Always are her accents heard;
She must ever wail and cry—
While the stars are in the sky!
I can never rest or sleep
For the noise she loves to keep!
With the bat she lives together,
In the rainy—snowy weather!
Every day my ear she tears
With her shrieks and hideous airs—
Every night all slumber flies
(At her wild salute) my eyes;
I am vexed, the long night through,
With her vile "to-hoo to-hoo!"
I believe that with these yells,
She the dogs of night impels!
Filthy and untoward fowl,
With fat head, and hideous howl,
Forehead broad, and ruddy breast—
Foe of mice, with mouse-hued vest!
Worthless thing with formal port,
Dingy hue, and leafy court;
With demure and solemn face—
Goblin of the feathered race!

Her each bird a buffet gives—
It is strange that still she lives!
More she utters on the hill,
Than the nightingale—at night;
But in hollow tree, she still
Guards her head—in the day-light!
Bird of Gwyn ap Neath!* too long,
Her unseemly form I've known;
Dolt of darkness! whose harsh song
By the thieves is deemed their own;
How I hate her luckless tone!
Never shall I want a lay,
Though her voice were far away.
Firebrands, till the frost is past,
In each ivy-bush I'll cast!

THE PEDIGREE OF THE OWL.

Creature of the world of gloom!
Owlet with the dusky plume!
With a song-like kitten's cries,
Less than bunch of down in size;

* 'Gwyn ap Neath,' the faery king.

Countess, delicate and slight,
Of the mountain rampart white!
May the shaft thy forehead tear;
Huntress fierce in glen remote,
Face of frown and grief of note!

OWL.

Spare! Oh, youth, for mercy spare!
Leave to me the woodlands—where
I am destined by my fate,
To endure the agony
Of sad penance—and the hate
Of all birds beneath the sky!
I must suffer in the night
Cold and mourning—in the light
Fear and wandering and flight!

POET.

Bird of wondrous sorrows, thou
With the countenance of age,
Wilt thou to the bard avow
What thy name and lineage?

OWL.

By the men of noble race,
I am called "Unrivalled Face."
At the banquetings of yore,
I the name "Flower Aspect" bore;
I was daughter of a chief,
Proudly through the land of Mon,
As the son of Meirchion known,
Rich in golden stores—

BARD.

Oh, grief!
Maiden, who art called " the Morn ;"
Who then wrought this fearful change ?

OWL.

Gwdion, son of Don, in scorn,
With his wand of magic sway,
Changed my beauty's proud array,
For the aspect you behold !
In revenge, because of old
Gronwy, Pevyr, Garanhir,
Of tall form and noble cheer,
Penllyn's lord—to me was dear*.

THE HOLLY GROVE.

Sweet holly grove, that soarest
A woodland fort, an armed bower!
In front of all the forest
Thy coral-loaded branches tower.

* The Mabinogi, or ancient Welsh legend, on which this poem is founded, has been published in the Cambrian Quarterly Magazine, by Dr. William Owen Pughe. Blodeuwedd ('Flower Aspect') was changed into an owl by Gwdion ap Don, a celebrated enchanter, as a punishment for her infidelity to her husband.

Thou shrine of love, whose depth defies
The axe—the tempest of the skies;
Whose boughs in winter's frost display
The brilliant livery of May!
Grove from the precipice suspended,
Like pillars of some holy fane;
With notes amid thy branches blended,
Like the deep organ's solemn strain.

* * * * * *

House of the birds of Paradise,
Round fane impervious to the skies;
On whose green roof two nights of rain
May fiercely beat, and beat in vain!
I know thy leaves are ever scathless;
The hardened steel as soon will blight;
When every grove and hill are pathless
With frosts of winter's lengthened night,
No goat from Havren's * banks I ween,
From thee a scanty meal may glean!
Though Spring's bleak wind with clamour launches
His wrath upon thy iron spray;
Armed holly tree! from thy firm branches
He will not wrest a tithe away!
Chapel of verdure, neatly wove,
Above the summit of the grove!

* 'Havren,' the river Severn.

THE SNOW IMAGE.

The bard, in going on a visit to Morvyth, tumbles over an image of snow.

Woe to the bard who feels the hate
So oft—of unpropitious fate!
Last night as from the inn I came *
To her who wears the clear moon's flame,
In thought exulting—and beguiled
By spirits boisterous and wild—
O'er savage hills I took my way,
Amid the wintry tempest's fray;
The snow came pelting fierce and fast,
Hurled in thick vollies by the blast;
Drifts lined the mountains and the rocks—
And every bower had frosty locks!
The blinded bard, amid those bowers,
Laughed not, I ween—as in Spring's hours!
As vexed and goaded on by fear,
I hurried thus in full career,
I marked not that the landscape's hue
At every step still whiter grew!

* Tafarn Gwin, 'the tavern of wine.'

I marked not from afar the site
Where lurked that most unhallowed wight,
Taught by the pangs, with which I groan,
Since then the wretch too well I've known,
By his base treach'ry tripp'd and thrown!
By his unwieldy form of snow
Roughly arrested in my track,
Onward, like arrow from a bow,
I sprung—then fell, and broke my back!
Detested form! that—like the trunk
Of aged tree—the bard o'erthrew;
How like thou art in form and hue
To an old miser—or a monk*,
A miser, and his bags of gold!
Woe to the miscreant who rolled
Thy figure from the snow, to be
A fence for "Hunchback" against me;
A fence to Hunchback, caitiff rude,
A plague to all the neighbourhood!
Thou loaf-shaped heap—thou rustic fort,
To break my legs—ill mannered sport!
Meal-coloured castle—snow-white pump,
Reared (where none need thee) on the hill;
Thou frigid post—thou frosty stump,
Ah, thou hast wrought me grievous ill!
And wrung with thy untimely blows
Blood from my feet and from my nose!

* '*How like thou art in form and hue*
To an old miser—or a monk.'

This is one of the poet's sneers at the religious orders of his time. In another poem, addressed to the Owl, he compares that *bird to* '*an old* abbess.'

Thou rugged heap, thou cumbrous mass,
That wilt not let a stranger pass;
Like a bear's skull—may the sun's light
Melt and disperse thy wintry height,
And break thy snowy forts—and may
The gallows tree the wretch repay,
The man of infamy and guilt,
Who thy untoward turrets built!
Ah, fatal haste! that made me break
My nose for beauteous Morvyth's sake!

THE CUCKOO'S RETURN

FROM A LOVE EMBASSY.

The bard asks the Cuckoo why he had not brought back a love message from Morvyth; he replies, that he had been stopped by the arrival of winter.

BARD.

Good morrow, bird of kindly tongue,
Whose voice is ever heard among
The forest's loftiest spray!
Where hast thou been away so long,
In what far land astray?
Thou, who hast plumes for thy array!

CUCKOO.

Four ages * I have been away!
My eyes with grief are blind;
With sickness and with sleeplessness,
I left my own sweet voice behind!
Thy name, alas! I cannot guess,
Thou who beneath the hazel tree
Thus with thy questions searchest me!

BARD.

Know then, the poet blythe and boon,
The love-sick bard, at whose command
Thou flew'st an outlaw from the land
To her of beauty like the noon!

CUCKOO.

Name then the lady of thy lay.

BARD.

S. and E. and N. and A.†

CUCKOO.

I asked the maid of golden locks,
Amid the birch-robed mountain rocks,
To meet thee!

* This is a proverb to express a long time.

† This is a kind of sportive watchword, by which the Cuckoo is supposed to obtain an assurance that she is speaking with the poet who sent her, and not with an impostor. Sena is the name of a beautiful woman.

BARD.

For thy courtesy
I thank thee.—But, ah, tell me why
Thou didst not journey speedily
Back with her answer?—art thou dumb,
Or is the trysting time not come?

CUCKOO.

With many a kind and courteous word,
The gentle lady charged thy bird;
And long ago on woodland boughs
Had I delivered all her vows,
But that (before I could return)
The earth grew naked, wild and stern,
With wintry darkness—tempests white,
And the keen wind's terrific spite,
That put me with the leaf to flight!

BARD.

This argues well thy wondrous care,
Prude of the leaf!

CUCKOO.

Sage poet, hear!
The woodcock promised me to bear
The lady's message to thy ear—
The woodcock, guest with ruddy hair—
When he should come with thee to dwell,
And with him bring the icicle!

BARD.

When did he promise to be here?

CUCKOO.

At Christmas he was to appear!

BARD.

Woe to the weak and wicked bird,
The careless envoy!—I have heard,
That in the thicket he lies low,
Pierced by a shaft from vig'rous bow!
Again, my cuckoo, take to flight,
And to the glorious paragon,
Through the green hazels hurry on,
And with expanded wings alight!
And give into bright Essyllt's hand
My letter, full of praises sweet;
Upon the birch grove take thy stand,
And thence for me the beauty greet!
Bell of the bush—warbler, whose lay
Lasts through the livelong summer's day!
Cuckoo! attired in robes of grey,
Thou serpent of the thicket—soar
Hence to the plane tree by her door!
With thy sweet "treble" summon her,
My simple woodland messenger!
And I from bush to bush will trace
Thy pinions to the trysting place,
Where thou must bring the maiden meek,
Of golden locks—with me to speak!

THE BIRD

THAT GUIDES HIM TO THE BOWER OF MORVYTH.

DESCRIPTION OF HER BOWER.

He declares in his usual style that. if the month of May should return once more, he would demand from Morvyth a fulfilment of her pledges to meet him in the green woods, and that he would trace out her arbour with the same speed and sagacity that the deer is tracked by hound and huntsman. He gives the following fanciful description of his companion in the pursuit.

By the welkin's side
Floats my airy guide,
With unrivall'd skill
And intonations sweet,
Indicating still
Whither Essyllt's feet
Through the forest glade
From my sight have stray'd,
And with comic lay
Calls on her to stay!
But for grief I could have smiled
At that warbler's frolics wild;
And when I wept and felt despair,
And fear'd I ne'er should find the fair,
He carroll'd forth a noble strain,
With silvery voice to soothe my pain;

But when he reach'd a certain grove,
He would not rove!
But o'er it all enraptur'd hung,
And all his choicest stanzas sung,
And to it like an anchor clung!
It was a glorious sight
To see the bird alight,
When first he found amid the woods of May
The maid with locks like gold upon the forest spray!

He then describes the bower in which they found Morvyth; it appears to have been formed of one birch tree: his description of the appearance of the sunbeams glancing through the leaves is very beautiful.

On the cliff her birch bower stands,
Tower unformed by axe or hands;
Noble mansion soaring high,
On one pillar—to the sky;
True affection's verdant shrine,
Where I've met the girl divine!
Flickering through its leafy caves,
Fitful sunbeams round us roll'd
Many a transient band of gold—
Gorgeous ridges like the waves—
Or rich coins that come and fly,
Whilst the girl with pale blue eye
Cast upon her lovesick bard
Many a bright and fond regard!

THE SNOW.

To-day I may not quit my home;
For maiden's love or maiden's plight
I dare not o'er my threshold roam;
For field and flood and vale and height
Are chained with frost, with snows are white!
Close as the scales on dragon's breast,
Those flakes would cluster round my vest;
And in a miller's lowly guise,
Conceal the bard from beauty's eyes!
Brightly to all created things
The lime-white vest of winter clings;
Fair as a grey stoled hermit's robe
It wraps this dark and dreary globe!
O'er every wood, o'er every grove,
Its veil of dazzling light is wove;
Spotless and glittering as mail,
Those snowy showers at random sail;
Not April's choicest flowers outvie
Those chilly blossoms of the sky.
Those show'rs of foam intensely driven,
In fleecy clouds from earth to heaven!
They seem mid Gwyneth's stormy skies,
Like the white bees of Paradise*!

* According to an old Welsh superstition the colour of bees was white till they were banished together with Adam from Paradise. I have endeavoured to give the leading ideas of *this poem* rather than to translate it closely.

And hill and glen, and rock and height,
Are one wild maze of beauteous blight!
What soul their native home can guess,
What band those silv'ry floods restrain,
Vanescent, beauteous, numberless,
Like the blue pavement of the main!

TO THE LARK.

HE ASKS THE LARK TO BE HIS ENVOY TO MORVYTH.

SENTINEL of the dawning light!
Reveller of the Spring!
How sweetly, nobly wild thy flight,
Thy boundless journeying,
Far from thy brethren of the woods alone,
A hermit chorister before God's throne!
Oh, wilt thou climb yon heav'ns for me,
Yon starry turret's height,
Thou interlude of melody,
'Twixt darkness and the light!
And find—(heav'n's blessings on thy pinions rest!)
My lady love—the moonlight of the west?
No woodland caroller art thou,
Far from the archer's eye,
Thy course is o'er the mountain's brow,
Thy music in the sky!
Then fearless be thy flight and strong,
Thou earthly denizen of angel song*!

* In the original the imagery is so rich and diversified that it is almost impossible to give a close translation. The preceding must be considered therefore in the light of an imitation,—an expression of the leading ideas,—rather than as a complete and accurate translation.

THE BARD'S REPROOF

TO HIS FAIR CONTRYWOMEN FOR THEIR FONDNESS FOR GAUDY DRESS.

Too oft the maidens of our land infold
Their lovely brows in rubies, pearls, and gold—
Too oft in meretricious charms delight!
With gems and beads each beauteous neck is bright,
And from each gentle hand wild falcons eye the light!
The vilest bow that e'er was framed of yew,
That in the hand abruptly snaps in two,
When all its faults are varnished o'er with gold,
Looks strong, and fair, and faultless, and—is sold;
But beauty's form should spurn each false disguise,
For love, in beauty's charms, no fault descries!
Would the pure radiance of the warlike mail,
That hangs on yon white wall with glimm'rings pale,
Gleam brightly thus, if muffled and concealed
In the long tabard*—that with many a shield
And many a rich emblazonry is dyed
By painter's hand, and all diversified
With rare devices?—On the brow of snow,
E'en thus no diadem fresh glory can bestow!

* 'In the long tabard.' A tabard was a dress worn over the armour, and emblazoned with devices. It began to come into *use about this time.*—See *Fosbrooke*, '*Tabardam.*'

THE BARD'S

LONG-TRIED AFFECTION FOR MORVYTH.

ALL my lifetime I have been
Bard to Morvyth, " golden mien!"
I have loved beyond belief,
Many a day to love and grief
For her sake have been a prey,
Who has on the moon's array!
Pledged my truth from youth till now,
To the girl of glossy brow.
Oh, the light her features wear,
Like the tortured torrent's glare!
Oft by love bewildered quite,
Have my aching feet all night
Stag-like tracked the forest shade
For the foam-complexioned maid,
Whom with passion firm and gay
I adored mid leaves of May!
Mid a thousand I could tell
One elastic footstep well!
I could speak to one sweet maid—
(Graceful figure!)—by her shade.
I could recognize till death,
One sweet maiden by her breath!

From the nightingale could learn
Where she tarries to discern;
There his noblest music swells
Through the portals of the dells!
When I am from her away,
I have neither laugh nor lay!
Neither soul nor sense is left,
I am half of mind bereft;
When she comes, with grief I part,
And am altogether heart!
Songs inspired, like flowing wine,
Rush into the mind of mine;
Sense enough again comes back
To direct me in my track!
Not one hour shall I be gay,
Whilst my Morvyth is away!

THE MIRROR.

I ALWAYS deemed my features bright,
And beautiful and fair,
Until yon mirror met my sight—
When, lo! an ugly face was there!
And from that mirror I have learned,
That now my beauty all is fled,

To yellow—Enid's scorn has turned
The glow that o'er my cheeks was spread!
And that by grief's incessant dews
My faded cheeks are changed to glass,
So striped with blue and yellow hues,
So thin, so pale, they seem, alas!
And that a razor now supplies,
Oh, woe! the place of the long nose;
And that the seat of the full eyes,
Holes, as by auger pierced, disclose!
That all the rich and flowing locks
Have fall'n for ever from my head—
Thy tale my sense, false mirror, mocks!
The wrinkles thou hast freely shed
O'er all my visage are the stains
Of thine own foul and mottled mien!
Had love thus wracked me with his pains,
Long in my grave should I have been!
Thou blue round moon—thou drear delusion!
Thou magnet fashioned sorceress!
Thou world of dreams and dire confusion,—
Ice-like in hue and brittleness!
Gem of enchantment—thing of guilt—
Of falsehood, treachery, and shame—
I'll fling thy frame by sorc'rers built—
Thou wry-mouthed mirror—to the flame!
If I give credit to thy tale,
For Gwyneth's maiden kind and meek:
My face is wrinkled o'er and pale—
Ah! she has power to blanch the cheek!

THE SUMMER.

The bard petitions the Summer to visit Glamorganshire with its choicest blessings. This fine poem was evidently composed after the death of his early patron, Ivor. The melancholy and affecting allusion to the lost friend of his youth, with which the poet concludes his gorgeous description of the summer landscape of South Wales, forms a transition of great beauty and pathos.

THOU Summer! father of delight,
With thy dense spray and thickets deep;
Gemmed monarch, with thy rapt'rous light,
Rousing thy subject glens from sleep!
Proud has thy march of triumph been,
Thou prophet, prince of forest green!
Artificer of wood and tree,
Thou painter of unrivalled skill,
Who ever scattered gems like thee,
And gorgeous webs on park and hill?
'Till vale and hill with radiant dies,
Became another Paradise!
And thou hast sprinkled leaves and flow'rs,
And goodly chains of leafy bow'rs;
And bid thy youthful warblers sing
On oak and knoll the song of spring.

And blackbird's note of ecstasy
Burst loudly from the woodbine tree,
Till all the world is thronged with gladness—
Her multitudes have done with sadness!
Oh, Summer! do I ask in vain?
Thus in thy glory wilt thou deign
My messenger to be?
Hence from the bowels of the land
Of wild, wild Gwyneth to the strand
Of fair Glamorgan—ocean's band—
Sweet margin of the sea!
To dear Glamorgan, when we part,
Oh, bear a thousand times my heart!
My blessing give a thousand times,
And crown with joy her glowing climes!
Take on her lovely vales thy stand,
And tread and trample round the land—
The beauteous shore whose harvest lies
All sheltered from inclement skies!
Radiant with corn and vineyards sweet,
And lakes of fish and mansions neat,
With halls of stone where kindness dwells,
And where each hospitable lord
Heaps for the stranger guest his board!
And where the gen'rous wine-cup swells;
With trees that bear the luscious pear
So thickly clust'ring every where,
That the fair country of my love
Looks dense as one continuous grove!
Her lofty woods with warblers teem,
Her fields with flow'rs that love the stream,
Her vallies varied crops display,
Eight kinds of corn, and three of hay;

Bright parlour, with her trefoiled floor!
Sweet garden spread on ocean's shore!
Glamorgan's bounteous knights award
Bright mead and burnished gold to me;
Glamorgan boasts of many a bard,
Well skilled in harp and vocal glee:
The districts round her border spread
From her have drawn their daily bread—
Her milk, her wheat, her varied stores,
Have been the life of distant shores!
And court and hamlet food have found
From the rich soil of Britain's southern bound.
And wilt thou then obey my power,
Thou Summer, in thy brightest hour?
To her thy glorious hues unfold
In one rich embassy of gold!
Her morns with bliss and splendour light,
And fondly kiss her mansions white;
Fling wealth and verdure o'er her bow'rs,
And for her gather all thy flow'rs!
Glance o'er her castles white with lime *
With genial glimmerings sublime;
Plant on the verdant coast thy feet,
Her lofty hills, her woodlands sweet;
Oh! lavish blossoms with thy hand
O'er all the forests of the land,
And let thy gifts like floods descending
O'er every hill and glen be blending;

* '*Her castles white with lime.*'

"It has from very remote antiquity been the custom," says *Edward Williams* (Iolo Morgamog), to "whitewash the houses *in Glamorganshire*, not only the inside but the outside also."

Let orchard, garden, vine express
Thy fulness and thy fruitfulness—
O'er all the land of beauty fling
The costly traces of thy wing!
And thus mid all thy radiant flowers,
Thy thick'ning leaves and glossy bowers,
The poet's task shall be to glean
Roses and flowers that softly bloom,
(The jewels of the forest's gloom!)
And trefoils wove in pavement green,
With sad humility to grace
His golden Ivor's resting place!

To enable the reader to perceive the full force of many of the allusions contained in the foregoing beautiful poem, it is necessary to give a brief account of the peculiar features of the fine district to which it relates. Glamorganshire, in its northern districts, is occupied by wild and romantic mountains, from the foot of which to the sea extends the rich vale of Glamorgan, proverbially called the garden of Wales. In this latter division, the climate is so mild that the products of the more southern countries of Europe are found to ripen in the open air; hence there is a peculiar splendour in the opening of this poem, where the bard contrasts the bleak mountains of North Wales, amongst which he is a sojourner, with this delicious region, in favour of which he invokes all the gifts of the summer and the sun.

This county is equally remarkable for the diversified beauty of its landscapes. "Its scenery," says a tourist, "is distinguished by unbounded variety; *it is full of pictures* from one end of the district to the other*." The ruins of its princely castles, in which the bard was entertained, still excite the admiration of the tourist. Edifices 'white with

* Malkin's South Wales.

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lime' continue a distinguishing feature in the landscape. Even the cottages are generally of a dazzling white, and adorned with the woodbine and eglantine—images which so often occur in the productions of the bard.

The last lines of the poem, in which the poet describes himself as gathering flowers to decorate the grave of Ivor, allude to a usage still prevalent in Glamorganshire and other parts of Wales, where it is considered a mark of respect and affection to plant flowers over the remains of the dead. Without adverting to this beautiful custom, the pathetic lines with which the bard concludes would not be fully understood. It will appear from the life of the poet, that the county of Glamorgan was to him—as he represents it in this poem—a land of hospitable patrons and kind protectors, whose mansions were ever open to receive him, and by whose generosity he was released from prison in the extremity of his distress.

THE SPIRIT.

On Sunday—sacred holiday!
As late at eve I stayed to pray
(By the bright lamps that light that shrine)
To God, and to his orders nine,
In yonder church, that to my eyes
Appears a second Paradise—
A sudden tremor shook the ground!
Towards the deep and awful sound,
Thus questioning, I turned me round:
" By Him who in the sacred host
Is present—and the Holy Ghost!
Thou that thus lurkest in the gloom—
Thus low upon the pavement here,
Beneath the corner of the tomb!
Whose rugged murmurings I hear,
Livest thou—thing of mournful song?
Or dost thou to the dead belong?
If, flick'ring shape! thou livest still,
Thou art in melancholy plight."
With thoughtful face, and accents shrill,
Thus answered the departed sprite:
" Unholy man, with joyous air!
I cannot profit by thy care!
In this sad form I dwell in cold,
And quake with anguish!—though of old
Buoyant with youth, and proud and bold,
I roamed and carolled every where—

Found praise and honour at command,
Like thee—the darling of the land!
* I once had lovely auburn hair,
Like woodbine curled in tresses fair,
And eyes with lustre pure and bright,
Gifted with keen and searching sight—
A tongue with matchless stanzas gay,
And glory in the time of May;
The brilliant summer hours I spent
With maidens, mead, and merriment!
An end at last came to my pride,
With all my hopes and vaunts—I died!
And, like a stranger, from my head
In deaf dumb earth my hair I've shed:
My flesh is mingled with the mould,
And here, proud bard, thou dost behold
A sermon to the cot and hall—
I am a sermon now to all!
They who possess me well may preach!
For who my origin can teach?
And who can tell my name or race?
I have no longer nose or face!
Or voice—I am for ever dumb!
Or eyes—my eyes are holes become!
Or jaws—ah! skull so blank and damp,
Thou mouldy, foul, obstructive lamp †!

* These lines are evidently a description of the bard himself; the 'spirit' is in fact nothing else than the poet's melancholy picture of his own approaching fate.

† '*Thou mouldy, foul, obstructive lamp!*'

There is a singular resemblance between this line and the *celebrated* expression of Shakspeare: 'To lie in cold obstruction *and to rot.*'

Remember when, amid the stones,
Thou see'st my bare and fleshless bones,
Thou too must the long journey take,
That all of mortal birth must make !
Thou too must blacken in the sod,
And in that hour—oh ! may thy God
In mercy raise thy soul to heaven—
The God whose grace is freely given
Unto the dead on this blessed day *—
The dead—attired in pale array !"

* ' *On this blessed day.*'

The bard, at the beginning of the poem, says that this incident occurred on Sunday.

THE RUINED ARBOUR.

The bard in his old age describes to Morvyth the desolation that reigns in the scene of their early love.

Maid of lily form and mien,
As the summer day serene,
(Much of thee my song has been!)
As I waited yester e'en
For thee, mid the woodland boughs,
Where we first exchanged our vows—
Struck with sadness and with awe,
I beheld the well-known scene,
Where I first, in leafy screen,
Heard thy voice—thy figure saw!
Pliant then, and fresh and young,
O'er our seat our arbour hung,
And the favourite birch-tree bent
O'er us, with its spray unrent—
Summer's glory in its shoots,
Youthful stems around its roots—
Verdant temple, leafy roof!
Farm with cap of foliage crown'd,
Turret wove of curling woof,
Branches vigorous and round!
Where the woodland birds did pour
Their wild eloquence and lore!

Then in our sweet birchen tree
Sang the ouzel tenderly,
And I need not tell to thee
How he spoke most brilliantly!
And the nightingale at night
Sang smooth music in delight,
While, with love's united strain,
We returned his 'psalm' again!
Time now poignantly bereaves
Of their life the slender leaves,
Stems and boughs alone remain
In sad winter's sullen rain;
Age holds there tyrannic sway,
Whirlwinds toss its roof away,
And the ouzel's pride is o'er,
*With his head befleck'd with gold,
And the nightingale no more
Rhymes indites—it is too cold!
Still within my memory dwell
Days of youth, and love to thee—
Charms that all on earth excel—
Source of all my misery!
Of that long and luckless suit,
Care and anguish are the fruit—
Slumber from my eyelids scared,
And the grave—it is prepared!

* This line is a literal translation; though it does not suit the common ouzel, it may apply to the 'rose-coloured ouzel,' whose head is glossed with blue, purple, and green. Bewick, p. 95. In a poet so true to nature, this line still leaves a difficulty.

THE LAST SONG THE BARD SUNG.

YOUTH has fled, and like a dart
Grief is planted in my heart—
All the joy of life is gone,
(Strengthen me, thou Secret One*!)
Utterly have passed away
Youthful prowess—spirit gay,
Brain, and soul, and genius—Thou
Hast, O Love, thy vengeance now!
Wrung for ever from my tongue
Is the glorious power of song
That inspired my life so long—
Ivor, my illustrious guide,
Nest my patroness—his bride,
Morvyth, idol of my breast—
All are in the dust at rest!
By a life I loathe, oppress'd,
I am left alone to bear
Time's dread load of grief and care!
Rhymes no longer I indite,
And to woodland wilds recite—
In the groves no more I doat
On the cuckoo, and the note

* '*Strengthen me thou Secret One.*'—CELI.
'*The Secret One*,' a Welsh epithet for the Deity.

Of the nightingale—no more
Pine for maiden I adore—
For the kiss and murm'ring voice
Of the lady of my choice!
Age's pangs are on my brow,
(Love is not my sickness now!)
Love and all his joys are o'er,
E'en his memory I deplore!
All my strength like chaff is sear—
Death is threateningly near!
Near is the impending doom,
Earth, and darkness, and the tomb—
Christ, my thoughts, my footsteps lead!
Amen!—no other guide I need!

ORIGINAL POEMS.

TO AN ECHO IN SNOWDON.

THOU bodiless, shadowless elf! careering
From fell to rock, from rock to tow'r!
With many a shout of goblin laughter cheering
The mountain spirits in their craggy bow'r;
Turning to faery revelry and mirth
Each sound of weal or woe that owes its birth
To mortal man—frail being of an hour!

Like aspen leaf that quails with like emotion,
Beneath the summer's flick'ring breeze,
As from the hurricane whose fierce commotion
Wracks into dell and precipice the seas—
Like avalanche, whose earth-born thunders hear
Alike the bugle of the mountaineer,
And a whole army's warlike revelries!

Thus thou each voice that near thy dwelling lingers
With elfin murmurs dost salute,
Till the whole mountain fastness to thy fingers
Trembles instinct with music like a lute!
Like wintry floods the gathering chorus broods
O'er all the waste and boundless solitudes,
Nor fell nor fount nor precipice is mute.

The monarch's voice, the shepherd's idle shout,
And *childhood*'s laugh of ecstasy,
Alike have drawn thy sweet responses out,

And filled thy thousand hills with melody!
Mirror of sound! as ocean is of heaven,
(Its depths with sun and shade and storm engraven,
And tiny star and cloudy canopy!)
The earth, the sea, the palace, and the tomb
Teem with the marks of human pride;
How holy then is the melodious gloom
Of thy sweet oracle to none denied!
Floating to heav'n along the mountain air,
Like angel hosts that ever wait to bear
Before the throne of God the humblest infant's prayer!

THE ELEGY OF THE WARRIORS OF MORWYNION.

The lake of Morwynion or of 'Virgins'—for such is the import of its appellation—is situated in one of the most romantic districts of Merionethshire. But it owes its poetical celebrity and its name to one of those ancient fragments of Cambrian mythology called 'Mabinogion.' The lady of a Cambrian chieftain, so runs the legend, had conspired with a stranger to deprive her lord of his dominions and his life. The latter, having escaped by the aid of a powerful enchanter, was returning homeward in his company, when the catastrophe ensued to which the lake owes its designation. "Flower Aspect"—such was the name of the perfidious princess—"heard of their coming, and taking her maidens along with her, and seeking the mountain through the Cynval river, proceeded towards a court that was on the mountain; and they perceived not their way for fear, but went with their faces backwards, and thus they noticed nothing until they fell into the lake and were all drowned except Flower Aspect herself*." Flower Aspect was changed by the magician into an owl.

The subject of the following poem is an incursion into the vale in which the lake is situated, by one of those bands of Scandinavian freebooters, who, under the name of Norsemen, were long the terror of the shores of Great Britain, and of all the western coasts of Europe. The origin and habits of these freebooters are eloquently explained in the following passage from Sharon Turner's History of the Anglo-Saxons: "The sea-kings of the North were a race of beings whom Europe beheld with horror. Without a yard of territorial

* *Cambrian* Quarterly Magazine, vol. i. p. 425.

property—with no wealth but their ships—no force but their crews—and no hope but from their sword, they swarmed upon the boisterous ocean, and plundered in every district they could approach. It is declared to have been a law or custom in the North, that one of the male children should be selected to remain at home to inherit the government. The rest were exiled to the ocean to wield their sceptre amid the turbulent waters. The consent of the northern societies entitled all men of royal descent—who assumed piracy as a profession—to enjoy the name of kings, though they possessed no territory. The sea-kings had the same honour, but they were only a portion of those pirates or vikingr who in the ninth century were covering the ocean. Not only the children of the kings, but every man of importance equipped ships, and roamed the seas to acquire property by force. Piracy was not only the most honourable occupation, and the best harvest of wealth—it was not only consecrated to public estimation by the illustrious who pursued it, but no one was esteemed noble—no one was respected, who did not return in the winter to his home with ships laden with booty."

History teems with pictures of the ferocity by which their mode of warfare was distinguished; wherever they went they ravaged the country with fire and sword—and in the hour of victory they spared neither age nor sex.

The individual incursion that forms the subject of the following poem is purely imaginary. It is however perfectly certain that the coasts of Wales were frequently exposed to the ravages of these marauders, which affords, it is conceived, a sufficient historical basis for the frail poetical superstructure that has been erected upon it.

THE setting sun's last glimpse is on
Thy fairy depths—Morwynion!
Thy wilderness of breakers white—
Now dark, now eddying into light—

Seems, mid yon rugged mountain forms,
(Like heav'n's bow mid primeval storms)
Of better hopes the token—
Seems to a rifled land the trace
Of peace, of glory, and of grace,
When all around is broken!
The earthquake, with its iron shock—
That heaves the plain, that rends the rock,
Flings the thick city like a cloud—
All transiently thy face has ploughed!
When tower and tent with death are teeming—
Calm as the heav'ns around thee gleaming
Sleeps thy unruffled lake,
No record on its virgin spray
Of storm or earthquake past away—
No ripple on its mirror torn,
Save what the passing mountain horn
Might with its echoes wake,
Or breath of deer that pants to slake
The fever of the noontide hours,
In thy pure waters—Llyn * of flowers!—
Still art thou calm, and clear, and bright—
E'en in this hour of death and flight,
When ev'ry flow'ret on thy brink
Is doomed of war's red tide to drink;
As if thy waters did inherit
A peaceful gloom—a pensive spirit
From the lovely dead † that rest
Sepulchred within thy breast—

* 'Llyn'—a lake.

† An allusion to the legend before narrated, that the *ladens of Flower* Aspect's court, under the influence of *or, walked* backward into the lake, and were all drowned.

As the bright procession wound
Yonder distant summits round,
Like a long mist wreath it past
Gently wafted by the blast—
As it drew in dazzling rank
Nearer—nearer—to thy bank—
In thy wild expanse it sank!
Sank—like snow-flakes in the sun
Softly—brightly—one by one!
Sank—like moonbeams on the sea
Sadly—sweetly—gleamily!
Oh, pure and bloodless as thy wave—
Ere morning o'er the mountains rose—
Was each fantastic mound and cave
That round thy billows blackly close.
At dawn the note of battle sounded—
Blithe from his couch each warrior bounded,
To guide his courser's swelling form,
And arching neck, and eye of fire,
And godlike ecstasy of ire,
On the fierce children of the storm,
That dwell with axe and shield
On Ocean's dreary field—
And pitch their winged tents
Amid the elements!
It was a beauteous sight at dawn,
When cheerily as to the chase
From each sequestered valley drawn,
And sylvan nook, and upland lawn,
Those fated youths of Gwyneth's * race
Swept cloud-like down each rocky way,
As if to greet the new-born day,

* North Wales.

Where morning ever loveliest shone
In thy blue depths, Morwynion!
It was a sadly glorious sight—
As one by one the warriors past
All tremblingly—all sternly bright
An image on the lake was cast—
And horse and horseman glimmered red,
Like passing phantoms of the dead,
As if that mirror of the morning
Were rife with signs of grief and warning!—
Gorgeous shapes, sublime array,
Youth—hope—valour, where are they
That at dawn united shone
On thy banks, Morwynion?
Ask the vision of the night
Whither it has ta'en its flight—
Ask the shadow where it flies
When the sunbeam quits the skies—
Ask the rent sepulchral stone
For the epitaph that's flown—
Ask not from the dead
Where the pride of life is fled!—
Nobler than life's power or pride
Is the death that they have died!
Not a rank and not a man
Have retreated back a span
Since the crash of war began;
There they rest in goodly rows—
All unbroken by their foes,
Like the clouds at ev'ning's close,
Like the surges of the sea,
Graceful, wild, yet orderly!

Oh magnificent repose!
Youth—hope—valour, what have they
Like to death's sublime array?

SNOWDON.

Hill of my country! how sublime
E'en in these latter days art thou,
When stream and light'ning, war and time
Have wrested from thy triple brow
Its crown of forests—that of yore
Like some aërial palace rose,
And oft when every sea and shore
Were peopled with thy children's foes,
Within its mighty foliage gave
A living shelter to the brave!*
Well might our simple fathers say
That he who dares one night to dwell—
One night to dream away
On thy sublimest pinnacle—
Must wake a holier man
Than when the night began!

* *Snowdon*, which was always the refuge of the Welsh *princes in* time of danger, was in ancient times a vast forest.

*If aught that's earthly can impart
A poet's ecstasy of heart,
'Tis thy enchanted rocks and scaurs,
And peaks that mingle with the stars,
And headlong torrents bounding by
As from some fountain in the sky—
And golden clouds at random driven—
And dim lakes buried in the heaven—
And bright glens cloven in thy brow
As if by some enchanter's plough!
Oh! who could sleep one single night,
Unearthly Snowdon, on thy height,
Without in feeling more belonging
To the red stars around him thronging!
Well might the bards of freedom seek,
At midnight, on thy glimm'ring peak,
That pure and hallowed inspiration
That strung the bow and nerved the hand
A thousand times in Cambria's land,
Which wrung from tyranny's command
The Cambrian soil and nation!
King of the mountains, though the pride
Of all thy giant oaks is faded,
(Some to the hearth, some to the tide,)
And thou art all unshaded,
Save by the wandering clouds that weave
Their fleeting canopy at eve—
Still art thou all that can inspire
The patriot's love, the poet's lyre—

* It was believed by the old Welsh, that if any one would sleep a night on the highest peak of Snowdon, he would *awake in* the morning endowed with poetical inspiration.

Still does the gift to thee belong
Of valour, beauty, and of song—
Still shall thy eagle ramparts stand—
The throne—the shield—the altar of our land!

THE CLOUDS.

IN IMITATION OF DAVYTH AP GWILYM.

Earth has its summer flow'rs
That bloom and pass away—
The sea is track'd with showers
Of light and snowy spray;
But neither flower nor foam can vie
With the bright hues of yonder sky!
  Those clouds how beautiful they are!
Those rovers of the blast!
That in fantastic wreaths afar
O'er rock and mountain cast,
Seem like the tresses of the maid
That—(as she list'ning hung
O'er the lov'd harp her minstrel play'd,
The praise he oft had sung)—
Fell blending with the murm'ring strings—
Ah, me! in bright meanderings!

Alas for this dull nether earth!
Not e'en its elves can range
In such an ecstasy of mirth,
Of glamourie and change,
As those wild elves in azure tent—
Those fairies of the firmament!
Their only task by night or day
On yonder arch serene,
To mock the pomp and pride that play
O'er this sublimer scene!
Swords, cities, thrones, the wealth of Ind—
All rise and vanish with the wind!
And now they seem an angel stair
Of gossamer—unfurl'd
The vexed and wounded soul to bear
From this unquiet world!
And now, in storm and darkness driv'n,
They heave the thunderbolt of heav'n!
Oh! could the poet choose a vest
For her who has his heart,
He would not glean from ocean's crest,
Nor yet the hues impart,
That spread in glory and in mirth,
In summer o'er the laughing earth!
No! rather would he wildly climb
To steal their mantle hoar,
From yon fair stars that shine sublime
On heav'n's eternal shore!
Nought but the robes of heav'n above
Are worthy of the poet's love!

ON A MOUNTAIN TUMULUS.

The following poem is written in allusion to a well-known usage formerly prevalent amongst the Celtic race, by whom it was considered a mark of honour to a deceased person to add a stone to the mound that was raised over the spot in which his remains reposed. Accordingly, his friends and followers made a practice of throwing a stone on his grave whenever they passed by, thereby gradually increasing the height and dimensions of the monument of the illustrious dead. This custom gave rise to a proverbial expression 'to add another stone to his tarn,' implying to do a kindness to the person alluded to.

PEACE to the shades of him who sleeps
Beneath yon tarn's aërial steeps!
Far nobler is his tomb
Than all the pomp that waits the great—
The tears of well dissembled hate,
The dark procession's gloom,
The solemn knell at midnight toll'd,
The glorious requiem sadly roll'd
From yon majestic pile,
Whose awful echoes wildly spread,
Then fade (like voices of the dead)
Beneath the moonbeam's smile!
But though the despot's vanish'd power
May claim the pageant of an hour—

Can tyranny command
A sepulchre like this sublime,
Mid ev'ry shock of storm and time,
Still fresh from nature's hand!
The urn's proud characters decay,
And truth rebukes the hireling lay—
The venal poet's moan;
But brighter blooms this artless mound,
Where ev'ry stone that rises round
By sorrow's hand was thrown!
For earth and heav'n with man combine
To renovate this lonely shrine—
New verdure to impart
To its wild knoll and grassy surge,
That speak upon the mountain's verge,
The grief of many a heart!
Alas! if ev'ry grave were reft
Of all, except what love has left,
How soon would melt in air
The pond'rous tomb, the sculptured bust,
And leave the king's, the warrior's dust—
To these compared how bare!

IMITATION OF LLYWARCH HÊN'S LAMENT OVER CYNDDYLAN.

Llywarch Hên was a prince and bard of the seventh century. His works have been published by Dr. W. Owen Pughe, with a prose translation. The following is an imitation of his Elegy on Cynddylan, lord of the district about Shrewsbury, who was cut off by an incursion of the Saxons.

CYNDDYLAN'S hearth is dark to-night,
Cynddylan's halls are lone,
War's flame has revell'd o'er their might,
And quell'd their minstrel's tone,
And I am left to chaunt apart
One murmur of a broken heart!

Pengwern's* blue spears are gleamless now,
Her revelry is still,
The sword has blanched her chieftain's brow,
Her fearless sons are still,
And pagan feet to dust have trod
The dark robed messengers of God!

Cynddylan's shield, Cynddylan's pride,
The wand'ring snows are shading,
One palace pillar stands to guide
The woodbine's verdant braiding!
And I am left from all apart—
The minstrel of the broken heart!

* Shrewsbury.

A BARD'S ADDRESS TO THE RIVER WYE.

On the borders of Radnorshire and Brecknockshire the Wye flows for a considerable distance over a succession of rocky stairs or ledges: the banks of this river are rocky and beautifully wooded.

SWEET Wye, with thy waters now white as the snow,
Now dark as the thunder-cloud's banner of woe,
With thy curtain of forests that soar to the skies,
From the rocks that like shields to environ thee rise,
I would choose thee, fair river, to be—as thou art—
A zone to the land of my home and my heart*!
Oh! why should we wander beyond thy wild stream,
From the land of the harp, and the bard, and his dream?
The streams of the Saxon are languid and dead,
Like the mist on the mountain when summer is fled,
Beside them the castle of tyranny soars,
The rock and the mountain are far from their shores!
Then ne'er will I quit the free river and proud,
That floats o'er her rocks like a ladder of cloud,
With her wild thronging billows, now soften'd, now shrill,
Like the laugh of fair infants that sport o'er the hill—
Now all glowing with light, now all snowy with foam,
Like the maids of the land of my heart and my home!

* *'A zone to the land of my home and my heart!'*

This line is an allusion to the course which the Wye takes *along the* borders of Wales.

TREASURES OF CAMBRIAN ANTIQUITY.

NATIONS, like winds and waves,
Have their ebb and flow,
And on ocean's shores and caves
Winds and waves bestow
Traces of the wealth and power,
That was theirs for one brief hour—
Treasures cull'd from ev'ry shore
They had kiss'd or wander'd o'er—
Corals dug from deepest brine,
England's oak, and Norway's pine—
Grecian marbles all refined,
With the opulence of mind—
Wrecks of glories that appear
In a youthful hemisphere
Giant trees, and fruit and flow'r,
Rife with Nature's fullest pow'r!
If e'en winds and waves,
Ere they sever and depart,
Glean from ocean's shores and caves
Gems of nature and of art—
Shall we more regardless be
Than the tempest and the sea
Of the treasures we inherit,
Of our fathers' heart and spirit!
Of the records that remain,
Of their genius and their reign!

Shall we not these relics save
From the tempest and the wave?
Snatch them from the swift decay
That awaits all things of earth;
Bind them in a wreath that may
Soften sadness—hallow mirth!

FINIS.

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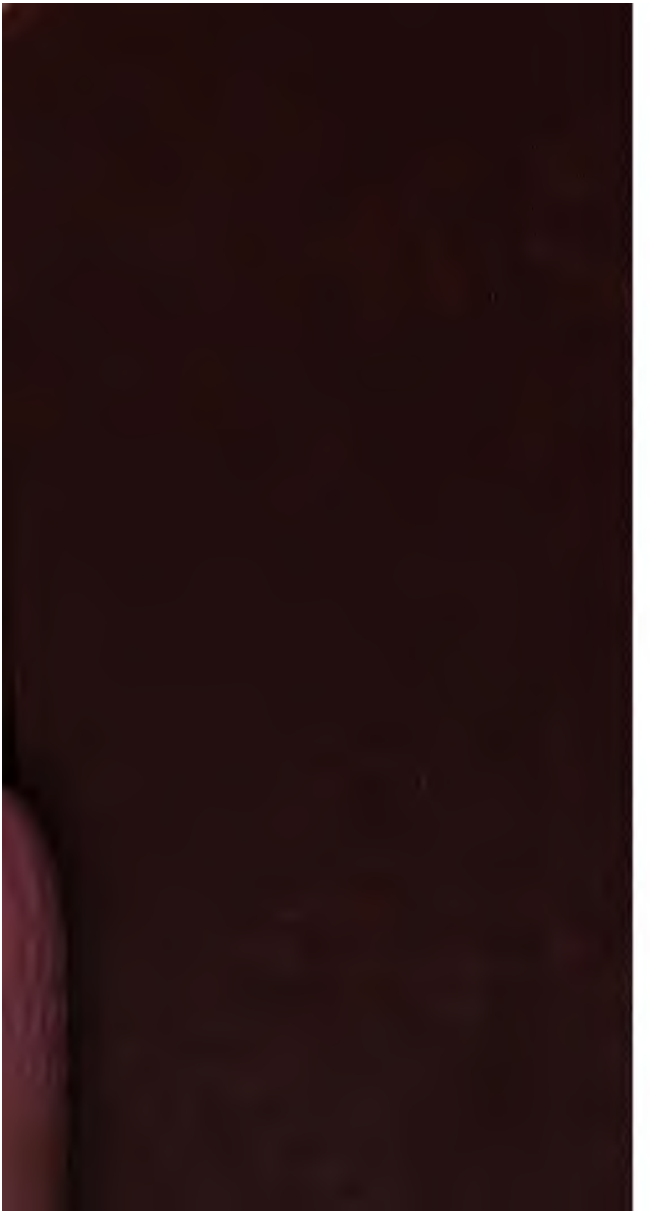
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